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# True Practice of Religion;

SHOWING THE MEANS BY WHICH TO
LIVE AS A TRUE DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST, IN HOLINESS AND PEACE; AND ALSO THE
MALADIES OF THE HUMAN MIND AND HEART, WHICH HINDER THE
TRUE PRACTICE OF RELIGION, WITH THEIR CAUSES AND
PROPER REMEDIES.

FROM THE DUTCH

## "Shorter Doctrine of Practice,"

OF THE

REV. EWALDUS KIST, D.D.

---

TWO VOLUMES IN ONE.

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NEW ORLEANS:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN BALL.
1852.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
42695
ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

King & Baird, Printers, Philadelphia.

## PREFACE OF THE TRANSLATOR.

The writer of the original, the Rev. Dr. Ewaldus Kist, was not only a man of great learning, and well acquainted with the human heart, but a pious servant of his Divine Master. Wherever his work is read, it has found its place beside the Bible. In one of the latest editions, Kist declares that he rejoiced in the visible blessing with which the Lord had crowned his work; and that Divine blessing follows it still. Some years ago, a wealthy man ordered six or seven thousand copies of it, which were gratuitously distributed among the Protestant Churches in Holland, in order to place it in the hands of those unable to purchase.

The Table of Contents will afford the reader a better idea of the plan of this work, and in fewer words than can be given in this Preface.

As to the translation, neither worldly gain nor vain ambition had any part in it; the desire of becoming, under God's blessing, the instrument of diffusing plainly-told, and true knowlege of God and the Saviour, and the way that leadeth to heaven,

caused me, for some time past, to devote to it every hour that was not taken up by other duties.

In this translation I have made some few alterations in the form, but not in the work itself. The style of the original is so peculiar, and the sentences often so long and complicated, that I have to claim the kind indulgence of my readers, if I have sometimes failed to make it as smooth as I desired. But, although deficient in many respects, I would pray God that it may exercise as beneficial an influence in our Churches as it did in the land of KIST; of whom it truly may be said, "he died in the Lord, and his works do follow him."

V.

*May*, 1851.

# CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME.


CHAPTER I.

FIRST PART.

Page

The true Christian ..... 13

SECOND PART.

The perfect Christian ..... 20

CHAPTER II.

On the reasons or motives which constrain us to become true Christians, and to grow in the exercise of Christianity ..... 35

CHAPTER III.

Difficulties and hindrances in the way of becoming true Christians, and growing or progressing as such ..... 52

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST PART.

Preparatory remarks ..... 67

SECOND PART.

ON THE MEANS THEMSELVES AND THEIR PROPER USE.

1. The Word of God ..... 72
2. Public worship—The Lord's Day ..... 79
3. Baptism—The Lord's Supper ..... 84
4. The working and indwelling of the Holy Spirit—Proper use of it ..... 94
5. Our access to God in Jesus Christ—Prayer—Private devotion—Secret prayer—Family prayer—Singing ..... 100
6. Conversation with the wise and pious—Useful reading—Religious society ..... 117
7. The works of Nature ..... 121
8. Providence—Observance of the ways of Providence ..... 125

Page

9. Divine Providence in regard to ourselves, &c..... 127
   1. Contributing circumstances..... 128
   2. Sin-preventing circumstances..... 129
   3. Trials..... 131
   4. Mercies and rewards..... 133
   5. Calamities and chastisements..... 137

THIRD PART.

On the warnings and weapons which God has provided for our Christian warfare..... 147

*First Precept.*—Know that you are in constant danger, and fear it 147

*Second Precept.*—Make it your earnest and sincere resolution to stand and to conquer..... 149

*Third Precept.*—Be ready, by providing yourself in time with weapons..... 150

*Fourth Precept.*—Do not seek the contest, but evade all occasions to sin wherever you can..... 156

*Fifth Precept.*—Far from trusting in ourselves, we must look to God, in Christ, for help and strength against temptations..... 164

*Sixth Precept.*—Let your prayer be accompanied by all comprising watchfulness..... 166

*Seventh Precept.*—Use your weapons against the temptations to sin, even the smallest, with courage..... 169

FOURTH PART.

RULES TO ASSIST US IN USING THE MEANS FOR OUR CHRISTIAN GROWTH, AND THE WEAPONS AGAINST THE CAUSES AND OCCASIONS OF SIN.

1. Of the habit of well-doing, through constant use of the means and repeated practice..... 175
2. Of time and order..... 177
3. The solemn consecration of ourselves to God and His service 180
4. The daily remembrance of our solemn engagement towards God..... 183
5. Of self-examination, in regard to our spiritual state and growth as Christians..... 185

# CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.


SECTION I.

Page

Introduction ..... 191

CHAPTER I.

OF THE MALADIES OF MEN WHO WALK IN THE PATHS OF SIN WITHOUT REFLECTION.

SECTION II.

Ignorance ..... 193

SECTION III.

Indifference about truth and error ..... 199

SECTION IV.

Knowledge and orthodoxy without heartfelt faith, without piety and virtue ..... 205

SECTION V.

Address to a libertine ..... 212

SECTION VI.

The more reserved worldly man ..... 219

SECTION VII.

The hypocrite ..... 226

SECTION VIII.

The careless and insensible ..... 231

CHAPTER II.

OF THE MALADIES OF MEN OF SOME REFLECTION, BUT WHO, FROM DIFFERENT CAUSES, PROCEED IN THE WAYS OF SIN, OR ARE HINDERED, AT LEAST, FROM ENTERING THE ROAD THAT LEADETH TO LIFE.

SECTION IX.

Introduction ..... 240

FIRST PART.

OF MEN, WHO USE SOME PRETEXTS IN MIS-USING IMPORTANT TRUTHS TO DEFEND THEIR SINS AND TO QUIET THEIR CONSCIENCES.

SECTION X.

Mis-use of the doctrine of human depravity and of temptations... 241

Page

SECTION XI.

Mis-use of the doctrine of God's mercifulness..... 244

SECTION XII.

Mis-use of the doctrine of God's long-suffering and grace, in order to delay conversions..... 247

SECTION XIII.

Mis-use of the doctrine of predestination..... 255

SECTION XIV.

Mis-use of the doctrine of Man's inability..... 259

SECOND PART.

OF MEN WHO REPOSE ON ERRONEOUS GROUNDS, AND TAKE SOME WRONG WAY TO OBTAIN PEACE FOR THEIR SOUL AND ETERNAL SALVATION.

SECTION XV.

Men who trust in their own righteousness..... 264

SECTION XVI.

Men who make Christ a servant of sin..... 275

SECTION XVII.

Men who serve God and the world..... 284

SECTION XVIII.

The apparently religious man, but in reality an enemy of heart-felt religion..... 291

THIRD PART.

OF MEN WHOSE RELIGIOUS CONVICTION STILL TAKES A WRONG DIRECTION.

SECTION XIX.

Men who live under much conviction and religious impressions, but still remain what they are..... 299

SECTION XX.

Men who trust in their religious sensibility and feelings..... 302

SECTION XXI.

Men of apparent religious sentiments, who, after having awakened the hope of their recovery, returned again to the world..... 308

SECTION XXII.

Men who have gone astray in the erroneous ways of fanaticism... 314

SECTION XXIII.

Despair..... 323

CHAPTER III.

OF THE MALADIES OF MEN WHO ARE DESIROUS TO COME TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, BUT WHO, FOR DIFFERENT DISCOURAGING OBJECTIONS, ARE HINDERED FROM OBTAINING TRUE REST AND STRENGTH FOR THEIR SOUL.

SECTION XXIV.

Page
Character of these men in general..... 325

SECTION XXV.

Introductory remarks..... 326

SECTION XXVI.

First consideration.—Is it possible that I should be saved?..... 327

SECTION XXVII.

Second consideration.—Is there ready willingness by God and Jesus to save me?..... 332

SECTION XXVIII.

Third consideration.—Derived from our unworthiness or the greatness of our sins..... 338

SECTION XXIX.

Fourth consideration.—Derived from the sin against the Holy Spirit..... 342

SECTION XXX.

Fifth consideration.—Derived from the want of a truly broken heart..... 345

SECTION XXXI.

Sixth consideration.—Derived from the doctrine of election..... 349

SECTION XXXII.

Seventh consideration.—Derived from the doctrine of our inability 352

SECTION XXXIII.

Eighth consideration.—On account of the different manner by which the way to life is represented in the Bible..... 354

SECTION XXXIV.

Ninth consideration.—Derived from the supposition of seeking God in vain..... 360

CHAPTER IV.

MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, WHICH PREVENT THEM FROM ATTAINING THAT DEGREE OF PERFECTION WHICH IS TO BE FOUND ON EARTH.

SECTION XXXV.

Introductory..... 369

FIRST PART.

MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, WHICH RELATE TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGION.

SECTION XXXVI.

Page

A small degree of religious knowledge ..... 369

SECTION XXXVII.

Depreciation of so-called scholastic learning ..... 372

SECTION XXXVIII.

Mis-directed zeal for knowledge, by which the practice loses more than it gains ..... 374

SECOND PART.

MALADIES OF PIOUS CHRISTIANS, WHICH RELATE TO FAITH.

SECTION XXXXIX.

Unsteady faith ..... 377

SECTION XL.

Little faith in the Divine truths in regard to ourselves, or want of assured confidence ..... 383

SECTION XLI.

Impure faith, or faith which is mixed up with erroneous ideas and conceptions ..... 385

THIRD PART.

OF SOME MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, IN RELATION TO SANCTIFICATION.

SECTION XLII.

Lukewarmness about sanctification ..... 392

SECTION XLIII.

Tendency to passiveness ..... 397

SECTION XLIV.

Separation of religion from our daily, domestic, and social duties 400

FOURTH PART.

A MALADY IN REGARD TO OUR CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

SECTION XLV.

Backsliding, ..... 404

FIFTH PART.

MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS IN REGARD TO THE FRUITS OF FAITH AND GODLINESS.

SECTION XLVI.

Of sadness, or want of joy and peace in the soul, ..... 410

SECTION XLVII.

Page

A Christian's doubtfulness about his state of grace, or want of assurance, ..... 413

SIXTH PART.

MALADIES IN REGARD TO DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH CHRISTIANS MAY BE BROUGHT.

SECTION XLVIII.

Troubles of the soul under misfortunes or calamities, ..... 423

SECTION XLIX.

It often seems as if God does not hear the prayers of his children. Anxiety produced by it, ..... 426

SECTION L.

What have we to understand by spiritual forsaking, or the hiding of God's face? ..... 429

SECTION LI.

A Christian under the fear of death, ..... 432

CHAPTER V.

DIRECTIONS AND LESSONS FOR MORE ADVANCED AND CONFIRMED CHRISTIANS.

SECTION LII.

Introductory, ..... 437

SECTION LIII.

Be on your guard against careless ease: Watch and strive, ..... 437

SECTION LIV.

Be on your guard against spiritual pride, and walk in humbleness before God and men, ..... 438

SECTION LV.

Love God, and glorify his Holy name, ..... 439

SECTION LVI.

Employ your improvements and gifts here on earth, to the well believing of your fellow-men, ..... 443

SECTION LVII.

Continue your way rejoicing in the cheerful prospect of the fulfilling of all God's promises, ..... 445

Conclusion, ..... 447

# THE TRUE PRACTICE OF RELIGION.

## CHAPTER I.

### PART FIRST.—THE TRUE CHRISTIAN.

#### Section I.

It is impossible to speak of a *Christian*, whatever position he may occupy in society, whatever his circumstances may be, without attributing to him at least *some* knowledge in regard to the Divine origin of the Gospel, as well as of the Doctrines which it reveals to mankind; for how could we believe in a Doctrine of which we never have heard? how could it otherwise exercise any influence over our sentiments, our words and deeds?

The Christian believes in the Divine Mission of Jesus and His Apostles. He believes that God sent his Son Jesus Christ into this world to reveal unto us some most important truths, but above all the way that leadeth to Heaven; he believes in His Divine mission, because he finds in the miracles and resurrection of Jesus sufficient testimony of it, and he therefore ascribes Divine authority to all that Jesus has spoken. He further believes that the Apostles, who were commissioned by the Saviour to preach the Gospel to every creature, had not

merely received this knowledge by daily following Him during his sojourn here on earth, but that they were qualified for their work by the Holy Spirit, who would lead them into all truth; that therefore their doctrines were derived from God; and thus the words of Jesus and His Apostles, as they are contained in the New Testament, are of Divine origin and must be accepted as the rule and standard of the Christian faith and conduct.

All which Jesus and His Apostles have declared, without any exception, and particularly about God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the sinful and miserable state of man, as well as in regard to the way of salvation and the duties it involves, the Christian accepts, not merely as the word of men but as the word of God. Some truths which they have declared, it is true, he is not able fully to comprehend, and they may appear for the time in contradiction with his limited reason; but as he believes, on well-founded proofs, in the Divine mission of Him who has spoken it, he cannot doubt His words. The simple fact that Jesus has spoken it, has more weight than the opinion of his own corrupt and limited understanding, or the opinions of the world.

### Section II.

The true Christian differs from the nominal Christian in this respect: that whereas the latter accepts the Gospel merely with his understanding and professes it with his lips, the former believes in it through the power of the Holy Spirit in regard to himself, and

bears testimony of its influence on the state of his heart and in his conduct.

In the *first* place, *the true Christian believes and feels that there is no true happiness without God.* The gospel declares to us the misery of sin, the insufficiency and instability of the things of this world, eternity as our destiny, and spiritual life as the only desirable good. The true Christian embraces these declarations with all his heart. The moment that God's Holy Spirit shows him the truth, by means of the Gospel, he awakes from a dream, in which the world appeared sufficient to render him perfectly happy. It is true all had not that dream, nor is it necessary in order to be a Christian; there are *some* who from their childhood have remembered their Creator and served Him; but oh, how great is the number of Christians who can remember the time when they served the world, and how happy was to them the day when their eyes were opened, and when they saw that *the end of sin is death;* the day when they felt the necessity of the assurance of God's favor, the desire to become His friends; to know, to serve, to resemble Him, in order to supply the vacancy in their souls, which thus far they had been unable to fill.

*Secondly. The true Christian learns to know himself, as separated from God by sin, and subject to His just and holy wrath.* He not only believes *in general* that God has appointed a day to judge all men, but he believes this declaration in regard *to himself;* not only that all men are sinners and under the Divine

wrath and curse, and thus in a state of endless misery as the consequence of sin, but he recognizes himself among their number. "I am a great and unworthy sinner before God, and deserve punishment. I myself," he declares, "will have to answer before a holy and just God." And now he beholds his sins in all their magnitude; he finds his heart corrupt and polluted by sin. He beholds the fearful consequences which sin unavoidably carries with it! He feels the impossibility of cleansing himself of what has been misdone, to reconcile himself with his Maker, and to return to righteousness and holiness; and oppressed by the weight of sin, and penetrated with the feeling of God's holiness, he exclaims: "*Remember not, O Lord, our former iniquities against us!*" His position fills his soul with humility, shame, and sorrow, and a melancholy fear would obtain the mastery over him, and all courage would fail, if the consolations of the Gospel were not able to bear him up; for *thirdly, the true Christian believes, in regard to himself, in the glorious promises of forgiving and redeeming grace in Jesus Christ.* He believes that God so loved our fallen race, that He gave His only begotten Son for wisdom, justification, sanctification and full redemption of sinful creatures; that God for Jesus' sake will forgive our sins and supply all our wants; and that whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ and accepts Him as his only Saviour, shall not perish but have everlasting life. He believes this through the influence of the Holy Spirit in regard to himself. "Jesus Christ came into this world," he says, "to

save sinners and to save ME. He is not only mighty but also willing to save. There is forgiveness and eternal life from God in Jesus, not only for others but also for me." He accepts these declarations, not with indifference, but with interest and gratitude; so that he is perfectly willing to be justified without money and without price, by free grace through Jesus Christ; and to be taught and sanctified by His Word and Spirit. Whenever he feels the weight of his sins, he beholds at the same time a Saviour, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. He beholds in Him the lovingkindness of a merciful Father. The work of redemption becomes the refuge of his penitent heart, and the foundation of his confidence. He looks to Christ as the Light of the World, whose blood alone cleanseth us from all sin, and to whom we may freely go for instruction and consolation, and be sanctified and preserved through His Word and Spirit. And looking up to that Saviour as our Advocate with the Father, the Christian approaches the throne of grace, and finds in God a kind and merciful Father, on whose promises he may rely, and whose dispositions will be all for his good.

*Lastly. This faith produces in the Christian true conversion.* I take the word *conversion* in its most extensive meaning; and then it expresses not only true repentance for sin and return to God, but, moreover, the earnest desire and effort to abstain from evil, to do good, and to perfect holiness.

"Through infinite compassion, the Son of God came to this world and died on a cross for unworthy sin-

ners, died for *me!* For His sake and by His free grace, God will forgive me all my sins! God, the Almighty God, who is infinitely happy in himself, and I his unworthy, poor, miserable creature!" Such thoughts must often become the subject of the Christian's meditations; and can it be but they will fill his soul with abhorrence of sin and with deep-felt sorrow that he has been living so long in disobedience to Him whose name is Holiness and Love? Can he think of the cross of Christ, and feel indifferent about sin,—sin which rendered the cross the only means for securing our eternal happiness? When he knows God as He has declared himself in Christ, Divine love is shed abroad in his heart. It becomes his highest aim to obtain the favor of God, his greatest desire to love Him, and to show his sincere gratitude by obeying the Lord Jesus Christ and imitating His holy and glorious example. This becomes his fixed resolution. To this end he consecrates himself to God and His holy service; and with constant prayer for Divine assistance, he uses all his powers to watch and fight against sin, and to live in conformity with the commandments of God.

*Important are the duties of the Christian.* The Gospel requires us to acquire more and more knowledge of God as our Heavenly Father, to love and obey Him, to revere His Holy name, to fear Him, and to submit ourselves freely to His Divine will; to trust in Him unconditionally, to acknowledge Him in all our ways, and to live to His glory. It is the Christian's duty to love the Lord Jesus Christ, to confess Him

before the world, to labor for the spread of His Gospel, for the extension of His Kingdom over the earth, and to be at any time willing to bear the cross and despise the shame for His name's sake. It is the duty of the Christian not to grieve the Holy Spirit, but thankfully to recognize His influence and in-dwelling, to hear and to follow His voice, and to rely on the strength which He is willing to grant in the same measure as we need it.

In regard to *himself*, the Christian has some duties to perform, all which tend to promote his bodily and spiritual welfare, his temporal and eternal happiness; thus, he has to learn to deny himself and the world; he must be humble, lowly-minded, temperate, chaste, modest, prudent, economical.

In regard to his *fellow men*, it is his duty to prove his brotherly love and charity by laboring for their eternal welfare, by assisting them whenever he can in their worldly concerns; by loving and exercising justice, mercy, benevolence, frankness, meekness, readiness to forgive, tenderness and faithfulness in the discharge of all the public and domestic duties connected with the circumstances in which God has placed him.

And although we may not easily find the man who is able to say, "*I have kept all these things*," still, the Christian desires in all sincerity to live in accordance with his obligations, and he may repeat with the maker of the 119th Psalm: "I have chosen the way of truth, thy judgments have I laid before me. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Make

me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight." He strives to perform these duties relying on Divine help; he is constantly on the guard against the sins which so easily beset him. And whenever he has sinned, he mourns over it, but finds relief in the consolatory truth that he has *an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is a propitiation for our sins;* he confesses his sins before him whose promises are yea and amen, and cleanseth us from all sin; with renewed courage and strength he recommences the good fight; and thus acting, his conduct, however imperfect in the eyes of a Holy God, will widely differ from that of the unconverted, unrighteous man, who, far from God and the Saviour, looks only to this world for true happiness.

PART SECOND.—THE PERFECT CHRISTIAN.

In the first part of this chapter we have endeavored to draw the outlines of the *true Christian;* and if we call ourselves Christians, disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must have recognized in those outlines, in some degree, and humble as the proportion may be, our own likeness. Or could we be Christians without any knowledge of the gospel? Without accepting it? Without love to God; without faith, and penitence, and submission; without an earnest desire, and striving to live in accordance with the commandments and example of the Saviour? But now we must not consider it sufficient to *become*

Christians,—as Christians we have to grow, grow in the practice of Christianity. We must become perfect Christians. *Perfect*, not in the sense of the word, as we use it in speaking of God, or of the *perfect* obedience and holiness of Jesus Christ; but in the sense of *completely*, *wholly*, *entirely*. In the circumstances in which we are placed on earth, we have to grow in perfectness; we have to attain our full growth, until we shall ultimately be made perfect in glory.

SECTION IV.

Many people form too elevated an idea of the perfectness of the true Christian in this world, which may exercise an unhappy influence on their own practice of religion. They suppose that his soul is so entirely filled with love and childlike obedience to God, that he experiences an unbroken calmness, and lives almost beyond the reach of the power of temptation and sin. His conduct, they say, must therefore, at all times, and under all circumstances, be in strict accordance with what he professes to believe and to be. He must always be a model of godliness, justice, soberness, meekness, self-denial; always ready to forgive, to help; so that it is hardly possible to detect the least fault in any of his acts; for to him it is an easy matter to control his passions, and he must always carry the conviction, for himself at least, of having well done. Now, if we form such high conceptions of the true Christian, we are ready to condemn the whole world; for everywhere we are surrounded by imperfect creatures, and nowhere will we

meet with one who answers always to the description our imagination has conceived. We then behold in Christianity something unattainable, and so elevated, that it becomes unnecessary for us to strive for it; and lastly, with this idealized portrait before us, we might consider ourselves unconverted and unworthy of the name of Christians; whereas, at the same time, we may have full ground to consider ourselves true followers of the Saviour, to enjoy the consolation this belief worketh in us, and to glorify the Divine grace bestowed on us, with gratitude and joy.

SECTION V.

*Proofs of the imperfection of the most pious men on earth.* The degree or measure of godliness and holiness which we have to attain, is nowhere in the Holy Scriptures stated nor limited. It is the Christian's duty and interest to strive after the highest degree of perfection. No doubt, but at all times there have been living some friends of God who, in tenderness of conscience and in holiness, have attained a very high degree, and far excelled others; but still they remained far from being perfect—the most holy men *offend daily in many things.* To prove this, let us observe,

I. *How God considers them.* His manner of dealing with them, and the declarations in His Holy Word, prove very plainly that He considers them as very imperfect beings, as long as they remain on earth. How often are they admonished and corrected in the Epistles of the Apostles! How abundant are the exhortations to encourage them to strive against sin,

to cleanse themselves of the impurities of the flesh and the spirit, to grow in godliness, and to live by faith on the Lord Jesus Christ! God wills that the Holy Supper should lead them continually to behold the blood of Christ which was shed for them. He directs us to pray every day of our lives: *Forgive us our trespasses.* And would God act thus towards holy, undefiled, angel-like men, or are these the dealings of a wise and loving father towards his imperfect and sinful children? What are moreover the declarations in His Holy Word? There we read thus: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sins?" Prov. xx. 9. "In thy sight shall no man be justified." Psalm cxliii. 2. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I John i. 8; &c.

Do we read in the first Epistle of John, iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," then the Apostle's meaning is, that such a one is not longer the slave of sin, that he does not commit sin willfully with the choice of his heart, that he does not persist in sin, nor could do it. If the Saviour says, Matt. v. 48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect," we have to understand him thus: Be ye perfect in love, not in *degree*, but in *kind*, as your father in heaven is perfect. Love not only your friends, but even your enemies.

II. *How do they consider themselves?* They deplore the want of holiness which they discover in their own hearts. Job says (chap. xlii. 5, 6,) "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine

eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." How often was it the language of David when he approached God with sorrow over past sins. "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant." Of Daniel we read, that he daily confessed his sins before God. Of what believer do we ever read in the Old Testament, that he found no need for sacrifices on the altar of Jehovah? The Apostle James confesses "In many things we offend all." And who among the most holy men on earth, would be willing to use a different language? Truly David says, on different occasions, that *he has kept the ways of the Lord*, or he prays that the Lord may reward him *according to his righteousness;* but then he speaks of his righteousness and innocence on particular occasions, as we can find many instances during the time when he was persecuted by Saul. But it is that same David who prayed, "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great."

III. By looking at the history of the most pious men who ever lived, we will find another proof of their imperfection while on earth. You may think here of Noah's drunkenness, of Abraham's falsehood, the sin of Lot and his daughters, the cunning conduct of Jacob, the unbelief of Moses, the moments of impatience and passion of Job, the manifold faults of David. Remember also the unbelief of the pious Zacharias, Peter's denial, yea, even the dispute between Paul and Barnabas; all prove that even the best of men were still far from being perfect.

Section VI.

The true Christian, as we find him here on earth, is not a perfect, holy being, who possesses always the same clearness of understanding, the same kind affections and dispositions, the same control over his passions, the same readiness and faithfulness in the discharge of his duties—on the contrary, we find in him a mixture of good and evil, of light and darkness, of weakness and strength, of righteousness and manifold faults.

As the Apostle Paul says, Gal. v. 17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The sinful corruption, which has not entirely left him, remains at war with the new life worked in him by the Holy Spirit through means of the Gospel; and this spiritual life remains in contest with his former sinful propensities. Although his conduct shows that the Spirit triumphs over the flesh, he often falls under the attacks of the latter, and neglects his duties in cases where he desired to perform them faithfully.

But why does not God, who justifies the believer, sanctify him at the very instant of his believing in Christ? Why is he not born, by the Spirit of God, to perfect holiness? Why has he to become gradually more and more holy; why has he to *grow* in knowledge, faith, and godliness? Allow me to answer, *first*, that God is a God of order; the same *order* we admire in the visible creation, He follows in regard to

our regeneration. The child does not at once become a man, nor the acorn a venerable tree. The desert is not changed into a garden as by some magical process, but only as the fruit of constant labor and care. So the Christian must, in God's plan, gradually lose his sinful propensities by constant watching and fighting, and gain, in the same proportion, in knowledge, faith, and holiness. But, *secondly*, it is impossible for the Christian, in his present state, to attain perfect holiness. I do not speak of the temptations of the world, nor of the king of darkness, to which he is constantly exposed, for the Lord Jesus Christ has shown us, by His example, that perfect holiness, in the midst of all this, was possible. But I allude, here, to our sinful body to which we are united during our sojourn in this world. This mortal body exercises such a deplorable influence over the soul, and is such a constant cause of sin, that a complete change of being is necessary to attain perfect holiness.

Renewed by God's Holy Spirit, we may war against the law of sin in our body; we may weaken our sinful propensities; but entirely destroy them we never can. To do this, God would have to work a miracle, and change our body, as in the day of the resurrection, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." To become perfectly holy, we must leave this corrupt body. Our soul must be loosened from its bonds, to obtain that holy purity which it can never find here below. Blessed prospect which the Gospel opens to the believer! Soon he will leave this body of corrup-

tion and sin; death will put an end to all the obstacles which hitherto hindered him in his glorious course; and when the capacities of his soul will have been sufficiently completed, or made perfect, then he will put on again that body which he left at the grave—but not as it is now, mortal, corrupt, a cause of sin; but glorious, incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, heavenly, powerful.

O, we cannot contemplate these prospects of the Christian without glorifying with Paul: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vii. 25. And beholding our imperfect state here on earth, and in view of the bright prospect before us, we feel constrained to adore the wisdom and power, the mercy and lovingkindness of our Heavenly Father towards his daily offending children; we thankfully acknowledge the grace of God in our salvation, through Jesus Christ.

Daily beholding the difference between good and evil, we cannot but love the one and hate the other more and more. Death is no longer to us a king of terror; but we long after Heaven, where the bonds of sin shall be broken, and perfect holiness be our portion forever and ever!

### Section VII.

If then absolute perfection in this world is impossible, what is then our meaning when we speak of a perfect Christian? This, that he daily progresses, daily grows in the practice or exercise of true Christianity. It is not that he has reached the summit of the mountain already, but that he daily advances

nearer to its crown; not that he has obtained the prize, but that he is running the good race with all his strength; not that he has obtained the victory, but that he is fighting the good fight as a faithful soldier of the Cross.

This naturally includes *Perseverance*, for we cannot expect that our faith should grow stronger if we do not stand by it; we certainly cannot make any progress in holiness, if we do not persevere in our choice of consecrating ourselves to God. This is the reason why Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him." 1 Cor. xv. 38; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Col. ii. 6. Barnabas exhorted the Christians: "that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." Acts xi. 23. And the Saviour himself has declared: "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matt. xxiv. 13.

We have now come to the point, *wherein the progress or growth of the Christian is manifested?* Let me answer, IN KNOWLEDGE. IN FAITH. IN HOLINESS.

SECTION VIII.

The Christian who advances in KNOWLEDGE, in the *first* place, *increases* his knowledge about God and His perfections, the works of Creation, of Providence, and Grace; about Jesus Christ; about himself as a man, as a sinner, and as a Christian; about the Bible

and its correct meaning; about the doctrines, duties, promises, &c., which it contains.

*Secondly.* His knowledge becomes more *clear*, *steadfast*, and *profound*. Many things now become plain and lucid which heretofore seemed to be obscure and difficult. His false ideas make room for the truth; he thinks more in accordance with the true doctrine of the Gospel. He does not mix different things which are really distinct; he learns to behold the declarations of the Gospel in their true character, order, and connection. He knows profoundly those things of which he had but a superficial idea heretofore. He is like the man whom the Saviour cured of his blindness, who first saw *men walking, as trees*, and afterwards *saw them clearly*.

*Thirdly.* His knowledge is *quickened and bears fruit.* It exercises power and influence over his feelings and conduct. He not only advances in the knowledge of the truths of Religion as mere truths, but he beholds them in all their beauty and loveliness, in all their greatness in regard to himself, so that he not only *knows* them, but also *loves* them with all his heart, and their influence manifests itself in his thoughts and deeds.

*Fourthly.* A Christian may be said to grow in knowledge *as his experience increases.* Young Christians have but little experience, but the knowledge of more advanced Christians has increased and become solid by their greater experience. For instance, he believed before that his heart was sinful and corrupt; but since experience has taught him

this day by day, he has received much deeper impressions of the same truth; before, he believed in the power and wisdom, the faithfulness and love of God and the Saviour, but in the same proportion as he has seen the proof of these Divine attributes in the history of his own life, in the ways of God's providence in regard to himself—I say, in the same proportion, his knowledge in this respect will be more enlarged, powerful, and practical.

*Lastly.* The Christian, growing in knowledge, will acquire more tact and ability to understand and to judge spiritual things, and belong no longer to the *children in understanding* who have *need of milk* but to them *that are of full age, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

SECTION IX.

*The Christian as he grows in faith.* We said before that the Christian must believe in the Divine Mission of Jesus and his Apostles, and further, in all which they have spoken or communicated. In regard to the first point, the Christian may be said to grow in faith, when by earnest study and the help of God's Holy Spirit he obtains more and more knowledge of the proofs of the divinity of the doctrines of Christ comprised in our Holy Bible, so that he feels more assured of their Divine origin, and less exposed to be shaken by the attacks of unbelief and doubt.

In regard to the second point, the doctrines themselves, the Christian grows in faith in proportion as his faith becomes *stronger, more simple and child*

*like, more alive and powerful.* It becomes *stronger*, so that it easier triumphs over its opposers, and remains unfaltering under trials. He heartily embraces all that God has revealed to us, surely accounting that it all is and will be as God has declared, because no falsehood could be possible with God, who is the Truth; no change is possible with Him who from eternity is the same and whose faithfulness cannot fail. Is his faith attacked or disputed either by the whispers of his own sinful nature or the mistaken opinion of the wise men of the world, who consider *the preaching of the Cross as foolishness*, these attacks lose day by day in their influence in proportion as the declarations of God gain with him in strength. He is willing to rely on God's promises even when his faith has to stand a trial, when circumstances become so dark that the fulfilling of those promises seems impossible. Even then he believes on, hoping against hope, knowing that He who promiseth is faithful and mighty to accomplish every thing, even by such means as in our eyes appear insufficient or contradictory.

*His faith becomes more single and childlike.* In simplicity of heart, he accepts the truths of the gospel in regard to himself. Other people may require additional proofs from without for the statements contained in the Bible; the Christian as he grows in faith, says, *the Lord has spoken it*, and this is sufficient for him. He may not be able to comprehend every revealed truth, every one of God's promises; still he believes in them. He feels more and more

that it is impossible that God could or would be willing to mislead him; and, on the contrary, that there is every reason to trust in God, as a good child accepts every word of his father as the truth, although he may not always be able to comprehend it.

*His faith becomes more alive and powerful*, or exercises more influence over his thoughts and deeds, when he desires and seeks more earnestly for God's favor, and those invisible, heavenly joys which will never end; when he learns to depend less on his own strength, but more on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; when he looks upon Jesus and the grace of God through Him, with more confidence and joy, in accordance with the blessed declarations of the gospel; so that his heart finds rest in the salvation through Christ, and he rejoices in God; when, lastly, his faith bears fruits in love and obedience to God, and more and more becomes a source of that holiness in word and deed, of which we will speak in the following paragraph.

### Section X.

How a Christian can be said to *progress*, to *grow* in *holiness*, may be brought under the following particulars. And *first*, a Christian grows in holiness, when his love towards God increases, and with it his desire for good, and abhorrence of sin. In every true Christian, faith worketh love to God; and again, love to God, abhorrence of sin and desire to do what pleases Him. Still these feelings have their degrees; they may increase or diminish; but in the Christian who grows in holiness they will become stronger and

quickened. With him it becomes the perpetual desire of his heart, founded upon proper knowledge, to serve God without regard to the opinions of the world.

*Secondly.* The Christian grows in holiness when this fixed desire has the result that he actually performs more good and less evil, that his conduct bears testimony what his heart earnestly wishes. Growing in holiness, he strives more against his secret sins, and widens the circle of his duties; and "whatsoever things are true, and honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," he "thinks of these things."

*Thirdly.* The Christian who grows in holiness, will excel more in those virtues which are recommended by the holy word and example of the Saviour; and which bear indisputable evidence of the reformed state of his heart, as there is the frequent desire for communion with God by meditation, thanksgiving, and prayer; reliance on Him in the greatest danger, unreserved submission to His holy will, humility, self-denial and denial of the world, charity and love even towards his enemies; all virtues in which Jesus has given us an example that we should follow Him, and which must adorn the Christian, if he possesses that spirit which was in Christ Jesus.

*Fourthly.* The Christian grows in holiness if he learns to perform his duties more and more from pure motives and with correct intentions. It is no longer his desire only to perform *much*, but what he does he wishes to do *well.* The good he does, he performs

more as in the immediate presence of God, from love towards Him and to His glory. It is no longer his own work, it is the Lord's in which he is engaged; he wishes to give proofs of his gratitude and love to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has so infinitely loved him; he wishes Jesus glory, and the extension of His kingdom on earth, by faithful obedience of the commandments of Him, its author and object.

*Fifthly.* The Christian grows in holiness when his sinful propensities, which hinder him in the exercise of duty, diminish gradually in power and influence, and when his ability increases to strive successfully against the temptations which daily beset him. Our sinful propensities do not leave us all at once; we can diminish and weaken their power and influence only by constantly and repeatedly striving against them. Temptations do not leave us, but growing in holiness, we learn more and more to be on our guard against them and to withstand their attacks.

*Lastly.* A Christian who grows in holiness feels more and more sorrow for his sins, but instead of being disheartened he assumes the strife with renewed courage and zeal. New converts are often less sensible of their sins, or they sometimes give up all hope of gaining in godliness and consider the battle lost. The Christian who progresses in the path of virtue and holiness, feels more and more sorrow for his daily offences and the impurity of his heart; but he does not lose his confidence in God, nor surrender himself to his enemies. His eye is fixed on the blood of Christ, the grace of God, and the continual forgive-

ness and strength which is to be found in Him. He returns with the confession of sin. He implores forgiveness and trusts in a forgiving God. And he renews the strife, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;" and strengthened by the power which He obtained, and will not withhold from us.

## CHAPTER II.

ON THE REASONS OR MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD CONSTRAIN US TO BECOME TRUE CHRISTIANS, AND TO GROW IN THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIANITY.

### Section XI.

In the foregoing chapter we have seen what it is to become a Christian, what it is to grow in the exercise of Christianity; but *why* is it *necessary* to become a Christian? *Why* should we strive to *grow* in knowledge, faith, and holiness? I will commence by answering the *first* question; and in doing so, allow me to address myself as if I were speaking to a person, who, although a Christian in name, never thought about his destiny with that earnestness which the case requires and deserves, or who from love to the world or to sin, has been restrained from the true practice of piety. The *first* reason then, my friend, which should prompt you to become a real Christian is, that *you live under the strongest obligations, that it is your duty to become a Christian.*

By neglecting it, you will in no wise be able to justify your conduct, but render yourselves liable to justly deserved punishment. Let me remind you of what God has done. He loved the world, and in His infinite love and compassion towards man, He sent, more than 1800 years ago, His only begotten Son into this world, as His ambassador, to speak to us in His name. As every ambassador proves by his credentials that he has the right to speak in the name of the government he represents, so also has the Lord Jesus Christ proved by His manifold miracles that he was sent from God, and that His words therfore must be considered as spoken by God Himself. "The works that I do," says Jesus, "in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." John x. 25. (Read also verses 36, 37, 38, etc.) This Divine mission of Jesus was proved by His resurrection from the dead, His glorious ascension to Heaven, and by different other circumstances which it is unnecessary to bring forward. The Apostle also gave abundant proofs that they were *messengers* of God and Jesus Christ: in other words, the blessed Gospel, which the Christian believes, "began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will." Heb. ii. 3, 4, 5.

Does it not follow from this that it is our duty to recognize the Divine mission of Jesus and His apostles? If we recognize an ambassador on account of

his credentials, why not Jesus by *the works which He did in His Father's name* and which bore witness of Him?

Do we refuse this, are we willingly blind to those more than sufficient evidences, we then reject God Almighty who sent Him, and has done all that was necessary to prevent any reasonable doubt on our part.

But do we recognize the Divine mission of Jesus and his apostles? Then also it follows that we must listen to the words they speak to us in the name of God; that we must accept those words as the truth, and direct our lives according to the commandments they have given. For, to refuse their doctrines, to disbelieve their declarations, to neglect their commandments and exhortations, is the same as refusing to listen when *God* speaks—to discredit *His* words, to neglect *His* commandments and exhortations; and may we act thus towards the God of Truth, the Lord of Heaven and earth?

But that it is *our duty* to become a Christian, will become still more plain to us, when looking into that Gospel which Jesus and His apostles have declared unto us. The Gospel requires that we consider ourselves with deep-felt humility as corrupt and guilty sinners, unable to save ourselves. Is this not a correct description of our state, and ought we not to feel and act accordingly? The Gospel requires that we believe in Jesus, as our only Saviour, Teacher, Mediator and Lord, (Prophet, Priest and King;) that through Him we should go to God, and accept the

grace of God in Jesus Christ with thankful hearts. And can we reject the Lord Jesus Christ, who has abundantly testified himself to be that person, without repaying God's infinite love to man with condemnable ingratitude? God could justly have left us to our well-deserved punishment. He acts differently. He sent his only begotten Son, and suffers Him to die for us, for *our* sins, in *our* stead. He orders that forgiveness of sins should be preached by free grace, through faith. In His name the offer of everlasting happiness is made; in His name the apostles beseech us to take heed of these things: "We are," says Paul, "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

And now, to reject God's infinite love in his glorious plan of salvation; reject a Saviour; reject the grace of God, what is it if not most condemnable ingratitude? Lastly: The Gospel requires that with true penitence over past sins, we must forsake them and return to God, and renouncing all iniquity and worldly lusts, live a soberly, righteous, and godly life in this present world. And can we make any reasonable objection to this? Is it asking too much that the transgressor be penitent? Is it not dutiful to return to a God and benefactor whom we have forsaken? Are His laws not built on right and justice? And does it, then, not become our duty to accept them as the rule of our conduct? Do we not answer in this manner the purpose for which God has created us, in living to His glory and to the good of our fel-

low men? Or would it be better to persevere in wickedness and sin, and thereby dishonor the holy name of God?

I doubt not you are ready to avow that your duty commands you to become a Christian; but the *second* motive which should constrain you to become a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is, that *your own happiness in life and in death depends upon it.* The Holy Scriptures contain the most positive declarations in this regard, which we cannot put aside. So we read, John iii. 36: "He that believeth on the Son, hath eternal life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And in the last chapter of Mark: "Preach the Gospel to every creature." "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." But allow me to consider, *first*, the misery into which we fall, but deeper and deeper, by refusing to become a Christian in truth; and *secondly*, the happiness which the practice of true religion imparts to the believer.

I. We have all sinned against God. By this we lose all which should be the source of our happiness, the assurance of God's favor and conformity unto Him; by this we render ourselves liable to justly deserved punishment, whereas we do not possess the power or means to save ourselves. By remaining in this state we are most miserable creatures, and to think death, judgment, and eternity is sufficient to fill us with fear. According to the Gospel there is salvation in Christ; the apostles, in the name of God,

beseech us to accept of it; to be reconciled with God, in order to be delivered out of the miserable state in which we find ourselves. But if we are deaf to those invitations, if we reject this grace of God in Jesus Christ, then it will be to us as if there was no salvation offered, as if Jesus had not died for us, as if God had left us in our hopeless and miserable condition. By rejecting God's offer, we remain the unhappy beings which sin has made us; nay, more than that, our position has become worse; for is the Gospel of Christ from God? is it our duty to accept it? Then it is necessarily the greatest sin to disbelieve—to disobey it. To the punishment for other sins will be added that which this greatest of all sins deserves, and which the obstinate unbeliever cannot escape in the day of judgment. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3. "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." Heb. xii. 25. Can you think of this, my friends, can you represent to yourselves the awful consequences of sin, without recognizing and feeling the great necessity of believing in the Lord Jesus, so that ye may not perish, but have everlasting life? But how much more will you be constrained to come to Jesus, if you look—

II. *On the happiness which the practice of true religion imparts to the believer, in this life as well as in the life to come.* It is impossible to enjoy unbroken, uninterrupted, perfect happiness in this world,

not only on account of the afflictions, pains and sorrows which are naturally attached to it, but also because the way to heaven is a narrow path, in which we are called to fight, to deny and to endure. However, there is real happiness to be found already in this world, which may briefly be seen in the following particulars, on which we may dwell more largely hereafter.

And *first.* The true Christian enjoys the forgiveness of his sins. "In Christ Jesus he has redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. i. 7. He does not fear any longer the punishment which his transgressions justly deserve, but has sufficient confidence to hope for forgiveness and to rejoice.

*Secondly.* The true Christian may behold in God his Heavenly Father who loves him. "Being justified by faith, he has peace with God through his Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John, iii. 1. Or is it not a source of happiness to be assured of the favor, the friendship, the fatherly love of that God, who is so great and mighty to fulfill our wants and desires, and who has given us His holy promises that He will assist His children, with council, light, help, consolation and deliverance, and who will direct all things for their good? Does it not fill our hearts with peace and joy when we can think: God considers me as the child that He loveth?

But *lastly.* The true Christian shares in the en-

joyments, advantages, and privileges which are inseparably united to the service of God. Not only that he enjoys that satisfaction, that calmness and rest which are the consequences of a tranquil conscience, but he also reaps the fruits which spring forth from the performance of the duties which God commanded. How amiable is it to know God; to behold Him in the splendid works of creation and revelation! What heavenly joy is there in the love of God and in praising His great and holy name! The man of sorrow never feels more consoled under his sufferings than when he is sheltered in the "secret place of the Most High," and can declare: "The Lord is my refuge and fortress: my God; in Him will I trust." Psalm 91. The value of earthly blessings is doubled if we receive them with grateful hearts to Him "from whom all blessings flow." Mutual love, benevolence, forgiveness towards enemies, are fountains of happiness. Sobriety, honesty, justice, charity, diligence, will work together to our temporal good. Show me an *unhappy* home where true religion dwelleth! In short, all the moral precepts which the Christian has to observe, are so wisely and so well arranged, that we cannot but gain greatly by observing them. David declares that "in keeping of them (God's commandments) there is great reward." Ps. ix.; and Jesus words were: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Those different sources of happiness are valuable to the Christian under all circumstances of life. In prosperity he acknowledges the hand of a Father

who deals so kindly towards him; in adversity he considers the calamities which befall him, as chastenings of the same Father who seeks his good only. Is the future dark before him, he finds strength in God. And at the approach of death, he has no cause for fear; for God will be his staff and guide even in the valley of the shadow of death; and he overcomes the terrors of death through the blessed hope of eternal life. For much greater will be the Christian's happiness in *the life to come.*" "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." John iii. 36. He is born again *unto* a *lively* hope, "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away reserved in Heaven for him." See 1 Peter i. 3, 4. Yes, the day shall come that his tears shall be wiped away, when he shall be freed from corruption and sin. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Then he will participate in *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, which although partly known to us, is every where represented in terms to indicate the most perfect and glorious happiness, and by far will exceed all human ideas or expectations.

SECTION XII.

I have now come to the second question: The necessity of *growing* in the practice of religion. And O may the desire for perfection be kindled in every Christian heart. May none be satisfied with the first principles of religion, but like Paul, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, press toward the

mark for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!" Phil. iii. 13, 14.

Before we go further, it may be well to remark here, that *it is possible to grow as a Christian.* Are there some people who wrongly imagine, that perfect obedience to God's commandments is possible in this world, there are others also, who fall into another extreme, and consider all progress or growth in the practice of religion as imaginary. According to their ideas, a Christian may obtain more and more knowledge of his sinful state, and feel the greater necessity of righteousness through Christ, but to grow in holiness does not enter into their views. This is contrary, however, to what the Holy Scriptures teach us. The Apostle Paul prayed and desired that the Colossians might "Be filled with the knowledge of the will of God, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, increasing in the knowledge of God." Col. i. 9, 10. To the Thessalonians he wrote, "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us, how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." 1 Thess. iv. 1. Would these prayers and exhortations, and many similar ones, be found in our Bible, if it was impossible or unnecessary to grow in knowledge, faith, and sanctification? Another proof of what we state, we will find in the means of grace which the Lord has provided, and of which we will speak in the fourth Chapter. Besides, if it were not so, it would be wrong to speak of the wisdom of God's ways with his people, in order to try and purify and

prepare them for Heaven, and it would be an altogether mistaken idea that the present life is a school, a time of war, a time of preparation for eternity.

But lastly, experience proves to us that it is possible to grow in the practice of religion; although we may observe among Christians, a great diversity in their progressing unto perfection, the same as we witness in the works of nature, trees and plants of the same sorts, which do not grow with the same rapidity and success. Not every disciple becomes a Peter in zeal; a Nathaniel in singleness of heart; a Mary in faith; a John in love and charity; a Dorcas in benevolence; but still nothing is easier to prove, by examples, that we can grow in Christian graces. The Apostle Paul declares of himself and his fellow-laborers, that though their *outward man perish, yet the inward man* was RENEWED DAY BY DAY. 2 Cor. iv. 16. To the Thessalonians he wrote: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth." 2 Thess. i. 3. Thus the Apostle John speaks of believers as *fathers, young men and children;* and how many witnesses have we in the history of pious men who, dependent on God's Holy Spirit, and using the Divinely provided means with all diligence, have exexceeded others in the path of virtue and godliness.

But if it is *possible* to grow in knowledge, faith and holiness, allow me to show that it is *the Christian's duty.*

Is it, as we have seen before, our duty *to become*

true Christians, our duty to learn to know God and Jesus Christ, to believe on Him, and to lead a life of holiness, then we can readily understand that it is also our duty to grow in all this, to abound in knowledge, faith and holiness? Or would a small measure of this, a part of your heart, a part of your time and of your labor be sufficient for Him, your Maker, your benefactor, and Saviour, to whom you belong with all your strength? Will you ever be able to say, that much less zeal and earnestness, much less faithfulness and perseverance, would have been equal to the richness of the grace of God, bestowed upon you; equal to the price of the blood of Christ which was shed for you?

Add hereto, that it is the expressed will of God, that a Christian must grow in grace. The epistles of the apostles abound in exhortations, "to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; to be rooted and built up in Him; established in the faith, steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Pet. iii. 18; Col. ii. 67; 1 Cor. xv. 58; 2 Cor. vii. 1; Heb. i. 1, 11, 12; Heb. v. 12. The means of grace which God has provided, as the Bible, the sacraments, the ministry, the ways of Providence, are given for *the perfecting of the saints*, that "we henceforth be no more children, but may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the head: even Christ." Eph. iv.

It is our duty to strive after perfection because the

more we advance, the more we live to the honor of God and the good of our fellowmen. A Christian who excels in knowledge, faith, and godliness is as a shining light in God's creation, a jewel in the crown of Christianity! He may proclaim God's perfections and inspire respect and confidence for His service and the blessed Gospel! Provided with sufficient knowledge, he may instruct others and correct errors. Strong in the faith himself, he becomes the right person to strengthen, to console, and encourage his brethren. As a faithful soldier of the cross he may guide and direct those who have but little practice and experience. His example may render many ashamed, encourage others, and win some for Christ who will willingly try to imitate him. Abounding in charity, he lives more and more for the benefit of his fellowmen; growing in grace, the circle widens in which he may be useful and promote happiness and peace? And must it not be the Christian's desire to live to the honor of God and the Saviour, the happiners of his fellowmen?

Manifold are thus the obligations under which the Christians lives to strive after perfection; but moreover it contributes in a powerful manner to his own happiness in this world and in the life to come.

For, *firstly, the more a Christian advances in knowledge, faith, and holiness, the more he participates in the enjoyment, advantages and privileges which they impart.*

If what we said before about the happiness of the true Christian be correct, then it follows that that

happiness must increase in proportion as a man thinks, speaks and acts more and more in accordance with the gospel. Is *knowledge* a source of happiness, then naturally our happiness must increase in the same measure as our knowledge increases about God's perfections as declared in his works and word. Faith in Christ produces peace and consolation. Distressing thoughts of doubt and fear with true believers are often the sole consequences of insufficient faith or narrow-minded conceptions of the gospel. And is it then not plain that a Christian will derive more consolation and peace, if his faith grows stronger and more distinct? The same is true in regard to our sanctification. Not only that by watching more closely against sin, and living holier, we enjoy more the satisfactory evidence of a calm conscience, which differs so much from the believer, who, less scrupulous about sin, suffers anguish and trouble by its reproving voice; but we feel also more and more that God's commandments are not grievous, not the despotic orders of a sovereign, but the kind and wise instructions of a father, who cares for the happiness of his child. Truly, by keeping strictly to the dictates of duty, we are able to say with the maker of the 119th Psalm: "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches."

*Secondly. Growth in knowledge, faith, and holiness, contributes to the Christian's happiness, because it is the most certain way to come to the consoling* ASSURANCE *of being in the state of grace.*

In describing the happiness of the true Christian

we remarked that he had the forgiveness of his sins, that he may look up to God as his friend and Father, and that he has ground to rejoice in the hope of eternal life. This forms the happiness of every true believer. But many live in the uncertainty whether they are really true believers, and whether they have therefore proper grounds to rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins, the favor of God, and the hope of everlasting life. They are in uncertainty about their state of grace, about their salvation, andthis naturally produces care and anxiety instead of joy and happiness and peace. This uncertainty is the consequence of their slow progress in Christianity. Faith and sanctification have commenced in them, but their faith is so weak, their piety so dim, that their new principles and desires are very difficult to recognize. Is it then astonishing if they are not certain of the gracious relation in which they are towards God, not certain of their salvation? But the more a Christian progresses in knowledge and faith, renouncing sin and living to God's glory, the more clearly he feels that he has passed from death unto life, and therefore has part in that happiness which belongeth to the true believer. O how consoling is this assurance! What a source of joy already here on earth! He enjoys the sweet consolation of forgiveness. He beholds himself in that close relation to God as his friend and Father, with whom he is reconciled, and rejoices in the possession of His favor and approbation. He has more confidence in approaching the throne of Grace, he acknowledges God more in all

his ways, and his communion with Him becomes more confident every day. He feels his right in appropriating to himself the blessed promises made to believers. He rejoices in the prospect of eternal salvation and glory! It is this which makes him glad in prosperity, which bears him up under adversities, and fills his soul with courage and calmness at the approach of death! In that solemn hour, when the man of little faith suffers perhaps under doubts or fears, then *his* soul is strengthened by the hope of eternal life, of which he has had a foretaste already here on earth, but which now he is going to enjoy in all its glory forever and ever.

For it is not his happiness *on earth* only which has gained by his growth in Christianity, but the crown of immortality which he strives to obtain will be the more glorious for it. You cannot doubt this, when you believe, on authority of the Bible, in the blessed truth that in Heaven there will be degrees of happiness or glory, and that these will be in proportion to the progress of true believers in knowledge, faith, and happiness, during their sojourn on this earth. The Apostle Peter, after exhorting the Christians, in the first chapter of his second Epistle, to give *all diligence*, and to add to their "faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity," says, in the eleventh verse, "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." The same is taught by the Saviour, in the parable of the Ten Pounds: Luke

xix. By Paul also, 2 Cor. v. 10, and other places. Moreover, the nature of the case shows it very plainly, that a Christian will enjoy Heaven in proportion to the treasures of knowledge and holiness he has laid up while on earth, and has acquired a taste for those joys which belong to eternity. Besides this all, God was pleased in His infinite goodness to affix to a holy and fruitful life, certain particular rewards for true believers in Jesus Christ, not because they deserve them, but by free grace, for their strength and encouragement. It is here the seed time—on the other side of the grave we will reap according as we have sown. *Your right to Heaven* rests only upon the merits of Christ, in which you partake by faith, but you become *fit for Heaven* by the gospel and spirit of Christ, by the way of striving and growing in knowledge, faith, and holiness. Look therefore at the crown which is hung up for you at the end of the race, and *so run that ye may obtain.*

## CHAPTER III.

DIFFICULTIES AND HINDRANCES IN THE WAY OF BECOMING TRUE CHRISTIANS, AND OUR GROWING OR PROGRESSING AS SUCH.

### Section XIII.

We have seen now that all is in favor of our becoming true Christians, and our striving after perfection. Nothing is more reasonable, more our duty, nothing more desirable, nothing will render us as happy. This is the way that leadeth to life. To walk in that way and to persevere until the end, must therefore be the object we constantly have in view, if we pay any attention to the demands of duty, or to our real interests for time and eternity. But we perceive many obstacles. It is not so easy to walk this road. The Saviour calls it, Matt. vii. 13, 14, "a strait gate, a narrow way." He says so, not because Heaven is opened only to a few, for this could not be the meaning of Him who commanded his apostles, "Preach the gospel to every creature;" neither because this way is a melancholy way, where we seek in vain for any source of happiness and joy. The contrary has been shown in the foregoing chapter; besides, it could not be the meaning of Jesus, who has said, "I will give you rest;" "My yoke is easy, and my burden light." But He called it thus on account of the powerful opposition which we encounter in it, which causes that we cannot take this road nor progress in it, without engaging in a difficult warfare. He who

walks in this way cannot follow his own inclinations, but is limited in all he does. He is bound by the declarations and precepts of God and Jesus Christ, bound even when his heart should wish to act to the contrary. It is no longer the question with him, What says my corrupt understanding? But, What declares Jesus in the name of His Father? No longer, What would *I* like to do? But, What is the will of God and Jesus concerning this? And to this he must freely submit. Against this will rebel *partly* his own depravity, *partly* the numerous temptations and occasions to sin, within and without, which bring him into a state of warfare and of struggle, which explain the Saviour's words, "Strait is the gate and narrow the way which leadeth unto life." For our better understanding it will be well to pause, *first*, at *the mournful depravity within* us; *secondly*, at the *manifold temptations and occasions for sin without;* and, *lastly*, at some *occasions for sin, within and without, which are but little observed.*

### Section XIV.

Man is not longer what he originally was. Created in God's image, after His likeness, he has lost that image by sin. This caused a total and unhappy change of our nature. Our mind has become feeble and darkened, our will deformed, our passions and desires disorderly. How often rise evil, vain, and foolish thoughts in our souls! How often our imagination is filled with temporary and sensual objects! How often do we retain and foster evil thoughts and

visions! What disorder do they create in our passions! One time we attach ourselves to lawful objects in a sinful manner, at another time sin itself becomes the object of our passions. What a foul source of iniquities is our heart!

One of the principal causes of this depravity is to be found in our body, to which our soul is united in this life. It is therefore that this depravity is called the flesh. This Paul teaches us when speaking of his body, Rom. vii. 24. as *a body of death*, which he calls thus on account of the deplorable influence it exercised over his soul in causing that depravity against which he had to struggle. And indeed our own experience proves daily what deplorable influence the corrupt body exercises over our souls. As an example let me merely remark, that according to our peculiarities of temper so we incline to certain sins. So the man of a sanguine temper is apt to be careless, frivolous, dissipated, sensual. A choleric temper gives sooner occasion to unbelief, doubtfulness, rash judgment, pride, vanity, wrath, vengeance, haughtiness. Persons who are of a hypochondriac nature have to strive against suspicion, superstition, fear, murmuring against Providence, severe thoughts of God, avarice, hatred, fearful, care for the future; whereas the phlegmatic temper is often the source of indolence, laziness, and inclination to an inactive and easy mode of life.

In converted Christians this depravity is not taken away, they have continually to fight against it, and not until their death will they be entirely free from

it. The Apostle Paul teaches the Gal. v. 16, 17: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." He affirms it with his own example, see Romans vii. 14–25, and who will compare himself to Paul?

And though we look in vain for his equal in zeal and purity of heart, still he saw *another law in his members warring against the law of his mind.* The same Paul who in all sincerity could declare: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," complained also: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" And what imply further the many exhortations to true believers to "strive to enter," to "purify themselves of all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit," to "keep their heart," to "mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit, to endure unto the end?" What imply the many complaints of the most pious men about their inward depravity? Their humble confession? their earnest prayers? "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." What implies all this? What else, but that in the most holy here on earth there remains a mournful depravity that wars against those nobler principles, which are the work of grace. But is it astonishing that this depravity revolts against

the true practice of Christianity? No; for the precepts of faith, godliness, and virtue, though rational and beneficial in themselves, are directly opposed to the corrupt nature and sinful inclinations of the sensual man. So, for instance, the command of a humble faith, the acceptance of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, the penitent confession of our sins, are in opposition with our doubtfulness, our false wisdom, and our pride. Prayer, the knowledge of God, our loving Him above all—how little does all this harmonize with our antipathy to all that is serious, with our love of ease and our attachment to worldly objects. How difficult is it to us, earthly minded creatures, to deny the world and ourself, to take up our cross, to mortify the members that are on the earth, and to refuse satisfaction to some strong passion which promises delight and pleasure. It is not easy to love our neighbur as ourselves, to forgive our enemies! The practice then of all such precepts renders it therefore necessary for us to fight, to watch and pray, in order to conquer: and in this respect the way to Heaven is rightly called *a strait way, a narrow path.*

### Section XV.

We have now come to the *second* point: *The temptations and occasions to sin from without.* They are many. He that endeavors to walk in the road of true piety, meets at every footstep an enemy, who at one time tries to lead him astray in the most flattering manner; another time disputes the road by

force, or who, by secretly laid snares, plots his ruin. Let me call your attention, *first*, to the *temptations of the world*. By *the world*, I understand all those sensual things in the world which too often have the power to animate the depravity of the human heart, and to lead us away from the observance of God's commandments. On the one side, we are often seduced by the glittering advantages and pleasures which the world offers to its admirers. Riches, abundance, honor, reputation, and sensual pleasures, represent themselves often in their most brilliant attire, and inflame our love to the world. And the favorable occasions which offer, to obtain more of these worldly goods, or to enjoy more of these pleasures, enchain our hearts, before we are aware of it, to prefer these things above God and His service. On the other hand, we are deterred from giving ourselves to virtue and godliness, by the hatred with which the world persecuteth the truly pious. We recall to our imagination those fearful times in which the Christians had to endure the severest sufferings for the name of Jesus; and often still may we witness how the pious man is exposed to manifold uncharitable judgments, hard reproach, and wounding disregard, and reviling of friends and acquaintances, of members of his household, who are enemies of the Cross. Add to this the cares of this life, and the different circumstances of wealth or poverty, reputation or misfortune, health or sickness, all which exert their disadvantageous influences on our moral state. What snares are laid against our virtue by the corrupt

customs of the world in which we move, by bad examples, bad society, bad discourses! How many serious and happy thoughts are lost by an unfruitful conversation! How many a time have we sinned by mixing in society, where, if differently situated, the power of conscience would have been sufficient to prevent our fall.

Besides these temptations from the world, the Bible speaks also of *temptations of the devil.* The Bible speaks often of evil spirits. Jesus cast the devils out, and gave that same power to his apostles. The devils complained, they addressed, they besought Jesus, and knew more of Him at that time than any man. The Saviour spoke to them, answered their petitions, and took occasion, when meeting with them, to say something about evil spirits and their power. Luke iv. and viii.; Mark i. 23-26; Matt. xvii. 18-21. Of the devils and their destiny, Jesus speaks in the description of the last judgment. Matt. xxv. 41. The head of the evil spirits is called the *enemy*, the *tempter*, the *evil one*, the *adversary*. Matt. xiii. 38, 39; Matt. iv. 3; Matt. vi. 13; 1 Pet. v. 8. The Saviour calls him "a murderer from the beginning." John viii. 44. He taught the malicious influence of evil spirits in the parables of the Sower and the Tares. Matt. xiii. Of this influence the Apostles Paul and Peter speak, 2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 26; Eph. ii. 2; 1 Pet. v. 8. Satan seduced Judas and Ananias. Of Peter, the Saviour said that "Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat," Luke xxii. 31; and Jesus himself was tempted

of him in the wilderness. We are exhorted to be "sober, vigilant," because of the devil; "to resist the devil," that he may flee from us; "to put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." 1 Pet. v. 8; James iv. 7; Eph. vi. 11.

According to these places of Scripture, a Christian's faith and virtue have to war, whenever God permits it, against the fiendish opposition of evil spirits, which, under their chief, called Satan, are laboring to prevent the advancement of truth and piety; who *in general* make it their work to lead men away from all that is good, and *in particular* are busy in sowing pernicious principles and error; in taking away the wholesome influence of the Word; in blinding, by sensual things, the understanding of man, lest the light of the gospel should shine unto them; who thereby work powerfully in the children of disobedience, and keep them in their snares; who in this manner use all possible means to shake the faith of true believers, and to endanger their piety; whose weapons are deceit and cunning, and who use the persecution of the world to execute, by fear and oppression, what they could not accomplish by deceit.

Here we must stop. This the BIBLE teaches. But to say more about the workings of the evil spirits, to point out precisely where and how the devil makes his attacks, what are exactly the means and manner by which he deceives, to give directions in order to distinguish his influence from the depravity of our

own heart—all this would be as groundless as it is dangerous.

### Section XVI.

It now remains to pause a moment at those *little, less observed* occasions for sin, as well *within us as from without.* I call them *little,* not because they are less dangerous, and therefore less to be feared, but because they make so little impression upon our souls that we readily overlook them, or, if we observe them, consider them as of little or no importance. Let us look *first* at those *within* us.

Evil thoughts which rise in our souls, and of which we have full knowledge, we consider as dangerous; but how often do we think lightly of those *faint* thoughts, which take possession of our souls, but of which we are hardly conscious. And still these faint thoughts have a powerful influence on the state of our hearts, and on our acts. These thoughts produce other evil thoughts, work on our imaginations, enlivening, through this, secret sinful desires, which again produce more sinful passions. How often has a fleeting thought, which at first passed in the soul as in a cloud, become the mother of some great transgression!

Every one will admit the danger of erroneous conceptions or ideas; but do we always pay sufficient attention to those little prejudices and mistaken opinions, which dwell within us and exercise a much greater influence than we imagine? Look for instance at Titius; he has been educated under false

ideas of religion, and received them as every child will do. Lately he has learned to know and has embraced *the truth*, and still he does not accept it always with all his heart and without doubting, on account of some uncertain feeling, even the power of prejudice. Who is entirely a stranger to the influence of prejudice? Erroneous, superstitious ideas, which we received from nurses, ghost-stories and such like, are never blotted out, although we have learned to think about them according to the truth.

It is unquestionably dangerous to foster strong desires after sin; but how little do we often regard the more secret sinful wishes of the heart, the first awakening desires after what is forbidden; and still these faint visions always precede the stronger passions, which, if not bridled in the beginning, soon become the master over us, and drive us along to commit a sin which we cannot longer resist. "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." James i. 14, 15. The first evil desire is like a spark that first but faintly glows, but if not smothered in time, burns slowly, and soon becomes a flame which at last bursts forth in all its fury, causing destruction on every side wherever it reaches. Never would David have become the murderer of Uriah, if he had subdued the first evil desire which Bathsheba produced in his soul.

An entirely unrenewed heart is, and who will deny it, like a bad tree that cannot bring forth good fruit; but how little do we pay attention to that "weak

point," which we find, even in the true believer, and to the current mood or disposition of the soul. The state of the soul is not the same in every individual. Every one has his peculiar sinful prepossessions, on which he is weaker than on others. One inclines more to pride, another to hatred, a third to adultery, a fourth to coveteousness. Neither is the state of the soul the same at all times. We have our times, when the passions are quiet and in rest; but again, there are moments when it takes but very little to inflame them, and to seduce us to sin. The same temptation which we easily resist to-day, may cause our fall to-morrow. Unless we keep this constantly in view, we expose ourselves to temptations, which, on account of the different dispositions of our souls, ought to be avoided with the utmost attention; we will be careless at the very moment when the greatest watchfulness is necessary.

Among the less observed sources of sin within us, we must name also our tolerance of *little* transgressions. Many will keep themselves from committing greater sins, but do not see the necessity of being so "particular" about small matters. One thinks it of little consequence to participate, for a time, in some almost harmless recreation, if he only abstain from the acknowledged immoral pleasures of the world. He considers it his duty to do justice; he would not be a thief or robber; but there are occasions in which a slight injustice, a little deceit, he easily permits. To suppose that we may sin until a certain point, and there stop, is to expose ourselves to go further and

further, and to commit a sin, of which we could not think at present without horror.. Every transgression in which we indulge, affects the soul in such a manner as to increase the lust to do evil. In tolerating little sins, our conscience loses its tenderness, so that if we suffer "trifles" to-day, we soon will feel easy about greater transgressions. A sin of less importance often brings us into difficulties, so as to commit a more serious one; this was the case with David; this was the case with Peter in the hall of Caiaphas. "Beware of the first step," preaches a great truth.

It may also be considered by some as a trifling matter, if we *repeat* those *little* sins, those *little* trespasses; but their influence on our moral state is very great indeed, for just in repeating them, they become the source of bad habits, the food for evil passions, and render us slaves of some peculiar sin. Nobody becomes all at once a drunkard, a miser, an adulterer; but by permitting ourselves repeatedly to indulge a little and a little again, we become at last drunkards, misers, adulterers.

And *lastly*, there are even *innocent things*, which, if we are not on our guard, *may lead to sin and sinful habits*. *Wit* in itself is certainly innocent; still the man who studies to be always witty, runs a great risk of employing his wit about most holy things, and of rendering himself unfit to be serious where he should wish to be nothing else.

Do we discover thus thousands of little sources in ourselves, not less numerous are the objects and

circumstances from without, which all may lead us to sin. Let us only name a few.

In order to withdraw our hearts from God, and to revive our love to the world and to sin, it is not necessary that the riches, the honors, and pleasures should present themselves to us in all their vain glory; far from it—a single profitable opportunity for gain; the simple receipt of praise bestowed on somebody else; a word, a place, an object, which reminds us of former enjoyments, which our imagination soon draws in enchanting colors; such little circumstances are often sufficient to revive our love to earthly things. Some extraordinary business, the least quarrel in the family circle, are often sufficient to render us unfit for calm communion with God. To the man who possesses a tendency to sensuality, an equivocal expression, the sight of a picture or a statue, a glance at a beautiful woman, the sound of her voice, are at many a time the means of filling his imagination with unclean desires, and to awake his dormant passion. A change of air or of the weather can unobservedly produce an unfavorable change in the state of our soul, by rendering us melancholy, and prepare us for some sin. A word heard as if not heard—an object only seen at a glance—these and many other insignificant things leave sometimes impressions on the soul of which we are hardly conscious, but which may become the source of disorder and sin, if we do not destroy their power in the beginning.

It does not require the bitter persecutions of the

world, no fagot or stake, to render us unfaithful to God and the Saviour; the threat of losing one's favor, a look of dissatisfaction or of disdain, the sneer of a friend or companion, such trifles would, without Divine grace, in many instances, alas, be more than enough to make us deny God and the Saviour before men!

To the temptations from without belong, no doubt, bad examples, bad society, bad conversation. Nobody who loves virtue and piety will consider these temptations of little importance. But how little regard do we pay to those refined, hardly perceptible temptations, which we encounter in conversation with the learned and the good, in our daily intercourse with men whose company we cannot consider as dangerous.

And still, *one* light expression of a man whose opinions in moral or religious matters we are wont to respect—*one* uncertain opinion uttered by *him*, throws sooner the seed of doubt into our souls, than the long-spun reasons of one whose knowledge and love of the truth are of a dubious character will be able to effect. If a man known for his piety should set us the example of a rather liberal use of wine or meat, of decent, refined slander, or of a more than becomingly gay conversation, how easy will we become with him less temperate, less charitable, less chaste in our discourse than what is corresponding with the earnestness of true Christianity; trespasses, against which we would have watched with much more care if they had presented themselves in a coarser dress.

Alas, how manifold are those less observed temptations and sources of sin! To be daily exposed to them! Truly, every where we are in danger! Powerful is the opposition we have to contend with on the road of godliness! The declaration of the Saviour is true: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life."

Our position would be most unhappy and miserable, but God in His infinite love has provided many and sufficient means to convert sinful and corrupt creatures to Him and His Son Jesus Christ; many and sufficient means to enable them, notwithstanding the strong opposition they meet on the road, to stand and to progress in the true practice of Christianity. It will be our pleasant task to meditate on those divinely ordained means in the following chapter, which we wish to divide into four parts: the *first* containing some preparatory remarks; the *second*, the *means* which God has provided, and their proper use; the *third*, the precepts and weapons which God gives us to withstand the opposition on our way to heaven; and the *last*, some tried rules, which may assist us in rendering success still more certain.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FIRST PART.—PREPARATORY REMARKS.

#### Section XVII.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, conversion to God, the steadfastness and progressing of the Christian in faith and godliness, in short, all that is good in man, is attributed in the Holy Scriptures as first originating with God; this, every true believer will gratefully and humbly acknowledge with praise and thanksgivings here below, and will be the theme of endless praise in heaven! See Phil. i. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 Cor. i. 6; Eph. v. 27; Titus ii. 14; Rom. viii. 35–39; 1 Thess. v. 23, 24; John xvii. 17; John x. 27–29; 1 Peter i, 5, &c. "The God of all grace," says the Apostle Peter, 1 Pet. v. 10, 11, "who has called us unto His eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." And every believer repeats with him: "To him be glory and dominion forever and ever: Amen."

#### Section XVIII.

Is God of a truth the first cause of the conversion and growth of a Christian, not less true is it that He provided *means* which, in His hand, are proper to persuade men, in a rational manner, to become and to grow as Christians. It is *God* who, where, as "Paul planteth and Apollos watereth, gives the increase."

1 Cor. iii. 7, 9. The prophet Isaiah compares God's care for the moral education of Israel to the care of an Oriental landholder for his vineyard, so that he could say: "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" Isaiah v. 1–4. So, also, the Lord is represented as a gardener who digs about a fig tree and dungs it so that it may bear fruit, Luke xiii. 6-9; or one who *taketh away every branch* in the vine *that beareth no fruit*, but who *purgeth* also *every branch that beareth fruit, that it may bring forth more.* And truly, in what do we observe perfection (completeness) without *means*, which must work together to produce it? Never would we behold the golden corn-ear, if rain and sunshine and other powers of nature had not concurred together, with the labor and care of the planter, to develop in all its fullness the little grain which was sown.

### Section XIX.

From what we have said we must by no means conclude that it would be correct to expect that God will work in us all good, without effort of our own; for if God does convert, sanctify, and perfect man by *means*, then it becomes very plain, that we have to make use of those means to our own benefit. For instance, what profit could we derive from the Word of God, without reading it, hearing it, or meditating upon its contents? What benefit can we expect from the Sacraments if we do not partake of them, or if we remain ignorant about their meaning and value? What profit will we reap from chastisements if we do

not look to the instruction they convey? In the Holy Scriptures we find manifold direct exhortations to hear the Word of God, to read it, to lay it by in our hearts, to pray for the Holy Spirit, and not to grieve the Spirit; to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; to complete our sanctification in the fear of God, and others. Now, we must not philosophize concerning the sufficiency or insufficiency, the power or feebleness of these means; we have but to place ourselves in the way of them, and expect the most satisfactory result; not on account of the means themselves, but from Him who has provided them, and who by His grace is able to bless their influence on mind and soul in the most powerful manner. To God belongs, as we have seen, the honor and glory of our conversion, sanctification and perfection; but He does not treat us as mere machines, but as rational beings, by enlightening our minds, by inclining our hearts, by making us labor ourselves, so that we employ every possible effort in using the provided means for our reformation with all diligence. This connection between what God does for our perfection and what we have to do ourselves, with all diligence, is the constant doctrine of the Gospel. Read for instance, the first ten verses of the 2d Epistle of Peter. God is our instructor; He gives us the means which are necessary for our development; He has to bless those means and possesses the power to do it; we must yield ourselves to be educated by Him, and use all providential means, lessons, and circumstances to our own benefit.

Section XX.

In closing these preparatory remarks, allow me to make one more; it is this: that *one Christian grace which we obtain, becomes the means to obtain another.* For instance, the same *knowledge* which we have obtained or enlarged, as the effect of certain means, becomes itself the means again to obtain or to be strengthened in our *faith.* How can I believe and confidently trust in Jesus without knowledge about His person, His word, His all-sufficiency and grace? How can I trust in God if I do not know Him, through the Gospel, as a God who is worthy of the full confidence of my soul? But, on the contrary, the more my *knowledge* about Him, about the Lord Jesus Christ, about the work of salvation, becomes pure, extended, quickened and clear, the more my *faith* will become immovable, quickened, and strong.

The same it is with *faith* in regard to *sanctification.* Faith purifies the heart; sanctifies our sentiments and conversation in the world. Faith is the powerful *means* to produce and to promote virtue and piety; for faith in the salvation through Christ, in the richness of God's forgiving grace in Him, takes away the enmity in our heart against God, and kindles that love for Him which seeks with a tender care to please Him. *Faith* in a gracious Saviour, who through infinite love has been willing to suffer and die on a cross for unworthy sinners, constrains the heart to love that Redeemer in return, and moved by that love, to keep His commandments. *Faith* contemplates in the Cross of Christ the guilt and misery

of sin; the true believer, beholds himself crucified, punished for his sins in Christ; and should not the cross then become to him a loud-speaking, warning voice to beware of sin? *Faith* makes us partakers of the promised help of the Holy Spirit, by enabling us to pray for His assistance, and approach boldly to the throne of grace for mercy, and for help in time of need. By *faith* we are confident (what could give us more strength?) that, striving against temptations, the Lord is on our side and will secure to us the victory. *Faith* lifts us up whenever we stumble, and encourages us to renew the conflict, notwithstanding the wounds we may have received. *Faith* embraces a doctrine that contains not only the most powerful motives for the practice of virtue and piety, but also the needful directions to walk in the road of goodness, fixing our eye on that crown of immortality which await us at the end of our course. *Faith*, lastly, renders us submissive to God and confident in His word; it destroys our pride, makes us humble and lowly-minded, causes us to take proper care for our soul and body, which both are dearly bought, and are the Lord's, and inspires us in the best manner with sentiments of love, kindness, mercy, peace, charity, and readiness to forgive others.

"'Tis faith that changes all the heart;
'Tis faith that works by love,
That bids all sinful joys depart,
And lifts the thoughts above."

SECOND PART.—ON THE MEANS THEMSELVES AND THEIR PROPER USE.

## Section XXI.

### I.—The Word of God.

It pleased God to take care not only that the truth should gradually be proclaimed to our fallen race by Moses and the prophets, by Jesus and His Apostles, who gave abundant evidence of their Divine mission; but also that their Divine doctrine should be written down and transmitted to succeeding generations. It was ordered by HIS Providence that the Bible was to be translated into different languages and tongues; and by the invention of the art of printing, multiplied and multiplied so that every one, rich or poor, may possess and read it under his own roof. Truly, this is a most precious gift of Divine love. Or is it not a decided high privilege to possess a book in which God himself condescends to speak to us? How interesting are the contents of this Bible! What a glorious means in the hands of God to promote knowledge, faith, and godliness! Here are revealed the most important truths in regard to God and His service, and in particular in regard to our lost state, our salvation, and our obligations to thankfulness. Here we find the choicest collection of precepts, lessons, motives, directions, warnings, corrections, promises, consolations, histories, examples, proverbs, hymns, discourses, prayers; in one word, a treasure of admirable diversity of the most interesting objects

for our mind and heart. And we must prize this gift of God the higher, as He will work together with His word by his Holy Spirit in the most powerful manner. The Word of God is called "a fruitful seed," the "seed of regeneration," the "word of life," a "power of God to salvation to whosoever that believeth." The Word of God "is perfect, converting the soul; making wise the simple; rejoicing the heart; enlightening the eyes; consoling them that mourn; strengthening the suffering; encouraging the dying; and offering to the hopeless, the blessed prospect of eternal life through Jesus Christ." (See Psalm xix. 1; cxix. 2 Thess. xvi. 17. 2 Peter, i. 15–21.)

The reading of the Word of God. It is plain that with all the excellence of the Holy Scriptures, we cannot derive any benefit from them without reading and study. All who looked for true wisdom to salvation have left us herein their example; as the Christians in Berea, of whom we read (Acts xvii. 11) that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and *searched the Scriptures* whether these things were so. Jeremiah says: "Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of mine heart." Jer. xv. 16. So sung David and Solomon. Jesus approves the conduct of the Jews in searching the Scriptures. He has sanctioned it by his own conduct in the synagogue in Nazareth. Paul praised his son Timothy in that regard. Yea, "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord." Ps. i. 1, 2.

We therefore should often read and study the Bible, in solitude, in the family circle, at such an hour and place as circumstances will advise us. But allow me, my reader, to suggest a few directions in regard to *how we should read*, in order to reap the greatest benefit from it.

The first one regards *what we must read in the Bible.* All Scripture is profitable to some purpose or other, and may thus become from time to time the subject of our study. It will be well, however, to limit ourselves principally to those parts which may more directly serve for our edification, and to vary our reading in selecting such portions of Scripture as may be most adequate to present circumstances. As in all other matters, it is wisdom to commence with what is most easily understood. So it will be best to commence with the historical parts of the Old and New Testaments, the Proverbs and Psalms, before we read the Prophecies or the Book of Revelations. But whatever book of the Bible we select for our particular study, I think it should never interfere with our daily reading of some part of the gospel, the words of Jesus Christ and His Apostles, which are of so great an interest to every Christian!

In general it may be advisable not to read too much at a time—rather read little with *all* your attention, and think, reflect, meditate upon it. However, do other duties allow us much reading time, we will find out that the reading of an *entire* Epistle of the Apostles, some history from beginning to end, has its great advantages. In many instances it will

also help us in the better understanding of the writer's ideas; in many of the Epistles of Paul, for instance, the same strain of reasoning is continued for several chapters. And *lastly*, we must guard ourseves against falling into the superstitious practice of some people who let their Bible fall open *by chance*, in the belief that just on such a page they will find a passage which is particularly adapted to their spiritual wants. It is true, sometimes God is pleased in His kind providence to direct it thus, that a person should read at a certain time a certain place of Scripture which under God's blessing leads to his good; for thus it was with the *Ethiopean*, of which we read in the 8th chapter of Acts. So it was with Augustine, and Luther, and others. Many may testify the same by experience; and in those cases we must recognize with gratitude the hand of our Heavenly Father who thus cared for us. But now to derive from this that God will act in the same manner whenever *we* desire it, is to suppose a thing which has no foundation in any of God's promises. To this end God has not given us His Holy Word. This practice is dangerous, because we may think to read on the page which came first under our eyes, the will of God *in our particular case;* whereas, by consulting the Bible in a rational manner we might find out the result to be quite the reverse. This practice therefore has generally its own reward, as we often will read something entirely different from what we wished or expected. Never let us degrade the Bible to a kind of lottery!

We now come to the second point: *What are the*

*means to help us to the correct understanding of what we read in the Holy Scriptures?* Besides the utmost attention and prayer, it is necessary to take into consideration not only *what* is said, but *by whom*, *when*, and *where*, and *to whom* it is spoken; to look at the connection in which it is said, and the object; we must look to the style of the writer; compare scripture with scripture, to fix the meaning of an expression, and explain figurative speech by what is expressed more literally in another place. Above all, we must remember that the Bible was written in languages different from ours, in a different part of the world, under a different climate, customs, habits, &c., and that many expressions and customs belong entirely to the oriental style. To illustrate this with an example, we read for instance, Psalm vi. 6. "I am weary with my groaning, all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with tears;" and must it not be called ridiculous to understand these exaggerated expressions of oriental poetry, *literally?* Still there are many Christians who attach to these and such like expressions a too positive meaning, and believe that such high feelings are the necessary proofs of a truly renewed heart; and by not experiencing the same, reject themselves in despondency. We must feel our interest in the promises of God to us; but if we appropriate to ourselves any promise we find in the Holy Scripture, without looking to the connection in which it appears, and to whom it is made, we run a great risk of relying on words which were spoken *only* to Noah, Abraham,

David, or other particular persons, and which have no allusion to us at all.

The unbelieving, impenitent, is then in great danger of flattering himself with hopes and expectations which, according to the connections in which they appear, belong exclusively to them that fear the Lord.

Besides the use of the *references*, in the margin of the Bible, it may be advisable to use some commentator* in our reading of the Word of God; and further, to be a constant hearer of the preaching and expounding of the Scriptures, and to seek instruction and light in attending some "Bible Class," or in the conversation with some enlightened religious friend.

But with all this, in order to read God's Word with profit, read *with humble prayer to God*, for the powerful assistance of His Spirit in rendering the Word

* Commentators are useful for the unlearned as well as the learned, in so far as their remarks regard the mere translation of the original word—the present meaning of old English expressions, historical data, geographical observations, descriptions of countries, customs, and habits, explanations about measures, coins, &c.; but when they express *opinions*, we must never forget the difference which exists between the Bible and the Commentator; the first we must *believe*, for it is the Word of God; the second, being not inspired, may err. We may hear the *opinion* of *others*, but as we have to believe for ourselves, we must try to form our *own* opinion in matters of religion, as well as we do it in all others. We possess a great number of Commentators, and in our selecting one or more, we will do well to take the advice of our pastor. What we would recommend, however, to the unlearned, above all, is the Union Bible Dictionary, published by the American Sunday School Union, and which, for its small price, may be in the hands of every one.

fruitful to your heart. Read under deep impressions of the divinity of the Scriptures. *It is the Lord* who speaks. Read with desire, and with the sincere object to be instructed and edified. Read with the humility, singleness, docility, and tractability of a child. Read with regard to yourself, and *receive in all meekness the Word that is engrafted in you, and can save your soul.*

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Thus confessed David, in Psalm cxix., in regard to that portion of the Word of God which was then in existence; and in the same manner we must use the Holy Scriptures now—we must hide, preserve it in our hearts. The Saviour recommends this in the parable of the Sower, Luke viii. 15; and if we wish to answer to that description, we then desire and try our best to retain as much as possible what we learn about the words of God, so that they become lodged in our souls; we try to commit to memory declarations and promises, as they are contained in the Bible, so that we not only lay up a rich treasure in our hearts, but carry a Bible with us, which no earthly power can take from us. We then desire to become familiar with the Word of God, so that we remember its directions, commandments, and consolations, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, at the moment we need them most, and be able to repeat, with David, "They are my companions and my counsellors." It is therefore necessary not merely to read, but to meditate upon what we read—to take advice and counsel with

the Bible in our daily affairs, selecting every day some Bible-text, which becomes the particular subject of our thoughts.* For thus the Word of God becomes the property of the heart, a voice within us, which is always ready to advise, to warn, to rejoice, to comfort us; which will prove a faithful companion under all circumstances of life, a consoling angel in the hour of death! O, let us then desire and strive, that—

> "This lamp, through all the tedious night
> Of life, shall guide our way,
> Till we behold the clearer sight
> Of an eternal day!" HYMN 37.

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SECTION XXII.

II. Public Worship.—The Lord's Day.

Another of the *means*, in God's hand, to convert sinners and to promote the Christian's growth, is the blessed ordinance of *public and social worship*. I deem it not necessary here to *prove* that public worship, and the day thereto set apart, is an ordinance of Divine origin; but taking this for granted, I will only dwell a few moments upon its *advantages* and *proper use*.

Man is called to labor—but how unhappy would he be, how earthly would he become, how sensual, how brutish, if he was to labor day after day without ever enjoying any repose, without being led to higher

* The THREEFOLD CORD; or a Precept, Promise, and Prayer, published by the Presbyterian Board of Publication, is a beautiful guide in this exercise. Our children should commit to memory at least one Bible-text every week.

prospects and brighter scenes! What would become of care for the soul? But on the Sabbath day, every man, even the most humble laborer, has time and opportunity to engage in religious exercises, and to reflect more particularly on his most important interests. The day itself—the quietness in our thoroughfares—our closed warehouses and opened churches, all remind us of God and his service. How beneficial is public worship to our instruction, consolation, reformation, and improvement! There the Word of God is expounded, the Gospel preached. There the most valuable truths and duties are declared and taught; there we are commanded, invited, prayed, in the name of God and Jesus Christ, to be reconciled with God, and to live as renewed creatures in Christ Jesus. There the simple are instructed, the disorderly reproved, the careless warned, the erring enlightened, the feeble strengthened; there flows consolation for the mourning and the bereaved; there sound the words of encouragement to them that advance in the road of virtue and piety, to stand in the faith, and to finish their sanctification in the fear of God! Moreover, there joins a congregation in sacred praise and prayer to God and the Redeemer. And is this solemnity not of a nature to inspire us with religious feelings; the more so, as the Lord has attached to this His blessing in a particular manner? Wherever His Gospel is preached, He will follow it with His Spirit. "Where two or three assemble in my name, there will I be in their midst." And the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the

Day of Pentecost, the extended blessings on the preaching of the Gospel in its early days, and also in later times, the happy results of which we are still witnessing ourselves, may prove that the Lord is mindful of his promises to the Church!

*Employ of the Lord's day.* Is thus the Lord's day a matter of our utmost gratitude to God? then it naturally follows, that we must employ its hours in a proper manner. How we may do this, I wish to show in the example of Theophilus.

In the first place, *he regularly attends public worship.* On the Lord's day, he has made this a law to himself, if not prevented by peculiar circumstances or higher duties. It is far from him to believe, that he has no longer need of the preaching of the gospel. He possesses much more of that spirit of the primitive Christians, who delighted in coming together "with one accord;" or of David, who often in the strongest terms, expressed his zeal and joy in the public service of God. Psalm xlii.: "I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy day."

*Secondly. Theophilus endeavors to attend public worship in such a spirit, as may lead to a profitable result.* It is his earnest desire, that his mind and heart should take as deep an interest in the singing, prayer, thanksgiving, and confession of sins, as the solemnity of these acts require. He comes to hear the Word of God, with the true intention to be instructed, edified, guarded and consoled. When he takes his seat, he assumes not merely the outward

appearance of one who prays by himself; it is a true aspiration to God, for His assistance during the hour of worship; for His blessing on the word to his soul. He is on his guard against worldly thoughts, as well as against prejudices in regard to the Word of God, or him who expounds it. Under the sermon, he endeavors to awake his reverence, to hear with all his attention, to hear impartially, humbly, and with a desire to learn; to bring the word home to his own heart, and to preserve the impressions which the word has made.

In order to succeed the better in this, *Theophilus spends the whole day in such a manner as will contribute in rendering the public worship the most profitable to his soul.* He rises early, and remembering the benefits and holiness of the Sabbath-day, he asks God's blessing on the same. He rests from his daily labors and cares. As ever, he watches against sinful words or deeds, vain conversation or domestic quarrels, which bewilder the heart and take away the influence of the Word of God. He does not go to Church, without the necessary preparation. He is on his knees before the God of all grace, to implore the working of His Spirit, when engaged in His service, so that he may be there with proper intentions, in a proper manner, for his spiritual benefit. He goes there, remembering the saying of Solomon: "Keep thy foot with diligence, when thou entereth the House of God;" and making that distinction between a Church and any other house, which it justly deserves, as being consecrated to the most holy exer-

cises on earth. He meditates on what he has heard; it often becomes the theme of his conversation with others; it serves him to improve his knowledge or to quicken the good impressions which he received, and leads him to the throne of grace. On this day his meditations are also particularly directed to the resurrection of Christ, and salvation through His blood. Some time he may thus spend in reading, or in contemplating the works of Nature, or, following the example of Jesus, *in doing good.* He does not forbid himself all kind of enjoyment, so as to resume his daily labors with renewed zeal; but he chooses such enjoyments as correspond with the dignity of man and of the Christian.*

* The venerable Kist wrote the above, in a land where Sunday Schools are differently managed from those in our country. Otherwise his Theophilus would no doubt have been a Sunday School teacher. How few Christians can present a sufficient reason why they are not; and still how many more would find employ, if willing to engage in the most glorious cause here below! In instructing the young, in leading them to Jesus, nobody profits more than the teacher. Nothing will assist him better to enter the place of worship with proper feelings. In fulfilling the Saviour's command of preaching the gospel, in allowing "the children to come to Him," we not only instruct and edify ourselves, but we will learn to value the worth of a soul, the preciousness of the Bible, and above all the love of God and the Saviour, when we declare to others: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Sunday School teacher takes responsibilities upon him—a number of children are under *his* care—he has to *prepare* himself for his work. He is to be their example. He is to become their friend. But on every Sunday also, he sows seed of which he may behold the glorious fruit in

Section XXIII.

III. Baptism.—The Lord's Supper.

Among the means which God uses for our education, we will name, in the *third* place: *Baptism and the Holy Supper;* two holy solemnities, which represent to us, in *visible* emblems and actions, that same gospel which we may *read* or *hear*, by reading or by attending the preaching of the Word of God.

Baptism. The Saviour commanded His apostles to preach the gospel to every creature; to teach or to make disciples among all nations; and *to baptize* all who believed in their preaching, and declared their willingness to become followers of Jesus. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15, 16. His apostles obeyed that command. This external action had some interesting signification. For the commandment was *to baptize* those that believed *in the name, i. e.*, to the confession, the worship and service, of *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.* Their baptism must serve as a public and solemn sign, that they remained no longer Jews or Gentiles, but consecrated themselves to the true God, according to the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. By being baptized, they entered, and were accepted in the communion of the Christian Church, and engaged themselves with all other Christians in the confes-

Heaven until all eternity! There are responsibilities for the Sunday School teacher,—but there are others for him who is not. And may not the time come, that the latter weigh heavier than the first?

sion, worship and service of the true God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

To every one who acted thus in sincerity, Baptism represented and assured, *in general terms*, all the glorious promises of the Gospel; or *in particular*, that now he was cleansed from sin, by the grace of God who had forgiven him for Jesus' sake, and renewed his heart and conversation by the Holy Spirit, who would continue the work of his moral regeneration and growth; and further, Baptism was to remind him constantly of the necessity and obligation to mortify all sinful passions and lusts, and to walk in newness of life. See Mark xvi.; 16. 1 Peter iii. 21; Acts ii. 38; Acts xxii. 26; Rom. vi. 4; John iii. 7; Titus iii. 5; and Rom. vi. This Baptism must still be administered to all who embrace the Gospel, as well as to the children of Christian parents.

O how blessed is that institution of Baptism to promote our faith, joy, purity, and virtue! Think of men, who, after they have seen what Christianity is, come to Christ and confess the Saviour with true repentance and faith, and desire to be baptized. What impressions may they receive of this holy solemnity! How well adapted is it to represent to them the cleansing of their sins, to strengthen their faith in this respect, to give them the consolatory assurance of the forgiveness of sins, to make them rely on the regeneration of their corrupt nature by the Holy Spirit, and to quicken their zeal to live henceforth a life of purity and holiness; for Baptism speaks to them: "THUS you are called to purify also

yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit, and to live after the example of the risen Saviour, as new creatures, to the glory of God." Add to this the thought: "This moment I have openly declared to become a follower of Christ; I have solemnly consecrated myself to the service of the true God!" Must this not constrain them to remain faithful to their vows—will they not feel deeply their relation to their co-members of the body of Christ? Will it not heighten their interest in the extension and spiritual welfare of Christianity?

Although Baptism, to grown persons, leaves an impression of which, many of us, having been baptized in our infancy, never had any experience; still we are in a great measure compensated for this loss, and Baptism may be to us one of the powerful means to lead us on in the path of faith and godliness. By our parents we were, according to their holy vows, instructed and informed about our Baptism; from that time we might reflect on this ordinance, on the promises which we therein receive, on the obligations which it handed to us to accomplish. But what a joy, what an encouragement to believe and to trust in God, would it produce in our hearts, to learn that we belonged to a blessed Christian Nation,* to which the

* "A blessed Christian Nation."—A critic would possibly object that this expression ought to be changed, so as to be adapted to American institutions; but it is thought best to let it stand. This is, in truth, "a blessed Christian Nation;" for although the religion of Christ is not established by law, nor even alluded to in the Federal Constitution, yet the Spirit of Christ animates our whole system, and a reverence for His word pervades the popular mind.

promising voice of the gospel is addressed; and that on entering the world we received the solemn sign and seal that the God of our parents would be also our God! Did our father and mother dedicate us to God by presenting us to be baptized, we will find therein a powerful motive to ratify what they promised, and to consecrate ourselves, our lives, to the service of God. Moreover, the day we openly confessed Christ, did we not then ratify our Baptism? On that day we confessed, declared, and engaged in all respects as those do who receive Baptism at an advanced age. On that day we consecrated ourselves to the confession, service, and worship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And if that was the confession of our hearts, we recognized in our Baptism the same blessed assurances for our faith, our sanctification and joy, which it produces in the hearts of them who are baptized on the day they openly confess the Saviour.

But whether we received Baptism as believers, or as little children, who ratified it at the same time they came forward to confess the Saviour, we must, my dear Christians, often recollect that we were baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, if we desire baptism to produce in us the blessed results for which it was instituted. Remember often the promises you thereby received in the name of God, and on which you may safely rely; but also the responsibilities under which you live. O may the remembrance of the day on which by Baptism, or by its ratification in confessing Jesus,

you entered into the communion of the Church, never fade; may your thoughts, your emotions, your sentiments, and resolutions of that day, be written on the table of your hearts! Reflect upon this with reverence, with attention, with personal interest, whenever you are present at the administration of this holy ordinance. Endeavor to obtain clear and scriptural views of the doctrine of Baptism. Plead often in your prayers the glorious and graceful promises which you received in being baptized—renew often the vows which Baptism demanded, and may the thought to whom you belong, to whom you are dedicated, restrain you from doing evil, and encourage and strengthen you in the fulfillment of the duties you are called to perform.

The Holy Supper.—The second holy ordinance which Christ has instituted, for our growth in the practice of true Christianity, *is the Holy Supper*. On the night before His death on the cross He celebrated, for the last time, the Passover with His disciples. At the close of it, He took of the bread which was used on that occasion, blessed it, brake it, gave it to His disciples, saying "Take and eat." So also did He take one of the cups which went round at the Paschal Supper, gave it to His disciples, and spoke, "Drink ye all of it." He did not leave them ignorant about the meaning of this action. Of the broken bread He said, "This is" (this represents) "my body, which is broken for you." And of the cup, or of the wine which it contained, He said, "This is" (this represents) "my blood, the blood of the New Testa-

ment," by which the New Testament is confirmed, ratified with all its promises, "which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." It was as if He had said: "In the same manner, and as truly as I break this bread before you all, in the same manner and as truly as this wine is poured over in this cup, so also, in a few hours from now, my body will be broken, my blood will be shed to obtain forgiveness of your sins, to confirm the New Testament and to ratify its promises. 'This do,' He added, 'in remembrance of me.' When I shall be no longer on earth, come then, my disciples, often together, to break bread, and to drink of the wine, as we do now, remembering *me*, my sufferings and death, which I freely undergo, for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sins." In compliance with this institution of the Saviour, His first disciples came often together *to show forth His death* in this manner, and thus the Holy Supper has been celebrated by Christians, through all succeeding centuries, until this day.

How justly then do we regard the Holy Supper as among the strongest means to strengthen our faith, and to fill us with consolation. If I could raise the question: Has there ever lived a Jesus? the Holy Supper would dispel that doubt, as it plainly establishes the fact that it had an institution, and that the history which it represents is true. I celebrate it myself—if I look back in ecclesiastical history, I find the Holy Supper with my forefathers—in the time of the Reformation—in the Middle Ages—in the fourth century—with the primitive Christians, and at

last I must go back to the moment in which the great Instructor himself breaks the bread and says "*This is my body, which is broken for you.*" Could I doubt for a moment whether Jesus died for the remission of sin, here I receive the assurance from His own lips, and I see how He appointed the Holy Supper to remind us constantly of His reconciling death. Does it trouble me whether there will be forgiveness from God, in Jesus Christ, for *my* sins? Feels my heart low and oppressed by this thought? O how blessed it is then to behold these speaking emblems of that blood which was shed for the forgiveness of sins, and to confirm that New Testament, which promises grace to the greatest sinner, through faith in Christ; and not only grace, but abundant blessings in time and in eternity!

And besides this, the Holy Supper, under the coworking of the Holy Spirit, deepens in the heart our impressions of the great evil of sin, as exhibited in the sufferings of Jesus Christ; it quickens our knowledge of the love of God and the Saviour, and creates thereby sorrow for past transgressions, and abhorrence of sin; true repentance towards God, and penitent confession of our faults; courage and childlike obedience, love to God and Jesus, and desire and determination to live for Him and to His glory. The Holy Supper will improve us in being patient, submissive and confident in God under difficult circumstances, and teach us charity, brotherly love, readiness to help, to forgive, to be merciful, as we partake at the Holy Supper of *one* bread, and as it reminds

us in a most solemn manner of the greatest proof of love, of mercy and forgiveness.

Now to derive the desired benefit from this interesting solemnity, it is not a matter of indifference in what manner we celebrate it. That we should partake of it as often as the occasion presents itself, we will easily understand; moreover, we may learn this from the example of the primitive Christians, and the express command of Jesus. To profit by its celebration, depends above all on the proper use we make of it.

*There are ways to celebrate the Lord's Supper which instead of improving rather tend to make us worse.* Thus it is with people who approach the Lord's Table from entirely wrong motives,—to appear better than they are, to protect themselves from suspicion, to cover some great sin, or because it suits their position in Christian society. So there are others who behold in the Lord's Supper an absolution for their past sins, who either think that *their celebrating* of it will secure them forgiveness of sin, or suppose that it is one of the duties they have to accomplish in order to inherit eternal life. Not less pernicious is that way of approaching the Lord's Table, which is done in a light or trifling spirit, without any preparation before, nor any meditation after it.

*The Lord's Supper may be celebrated in such a manner as will neither improve nor harm us*, or by which one is prevented from deriving such benefit from it, as springs forth from its proper celebration.

This is the case when we are ignorant of the real

purpose of this solemnity, or when our ideas are erroneous in this regard; again, when, although not altogether unprepared, we do not pay that attention and time to preparing ourselves which this holy exercise demands, or when our hearts are in a quarrelsome and contentious mood. Above all, will this be the result if a man, though he may be pious, seeks something else at the Lord's Table, than it promises; when he expects and waits to receive something extraordinary, which will at once assure him that he is in a state of grace, or which will encourage him in some peculiarly difficult circumstance; when therefore he does not think of Jesus and salvation through His blood, but rather of himself, his private sentiments and circumstances. This way of *showing the death of the Lord* may, it is true, not harden his heart, but he will not gather the same fruit from it as if he had directed his thoughts according to the institution of the Lord.

*But what then is the proper and profitable manner in which we should celebrate the Lord's Supper?* How endeavors the true communicant to act and to think, *before*, *during*, and *after* this holy feast?

*Before*, he appropriates as much time, as his circumstances will allow, to prepare himself for a worthy partaking of it. He endeavors to obtain a proper knowledge of this solemnity, or calls to mind all its importance. He pauses at all the reasons which constrain him to take part in it. He examines himself (see 1 Cor. xi. 27–34) whether he is guilty of any abuse concerning the Lord's Supper, or whether

it is his desire to celebrate it in remembrance of Jesus who died for him. Thus he examines himself earnestly and under prayer to God, to be enlightened by His Holy Spirit, with the object to be purified in his ideas should they be in some regard erroneous, and "so to eat of that bread and to drink of that cup." Does he feel indisposed to celebrate the Holy Supper in the way it was instituted by our Saviour, he uses the means of meditation and prayer, in order to obtain that disposition. Does he discern in himself proofs of penitence, fervent faith and desire to serve God, he meditates then how often he came short in the path of duty and how much he needs forgiveness and healing; he meditates on what Jesus suffered and did "to take away" his sins, and by what strong obligations he is called to live more and more to His glory. He dedicates himself anew to God in Jesus Christ, and seeks sufficient strength in humble prayer, to renew these vows in a more solemn manner at the Lord's Table.

*The Lord's Supper itself* he seeks to celebrate as Jesus has instituted it, "in remembrance of Him." In beholding and taking of the bread and the wine, he represents to himself the bitter sufferings and death which Jesus underwent in infinite compassion for the forgiveness of sins. He contemplates also the Saviour, in that moment giving him, in those visible emblems, the solemn assurance that whosoever believeth in Him, (and thus he himself if he believes in Him,) has the forgiveness of his sins, and eternal life through His name. He aspires to a complete

belief in this sealed promise of God, and desires to accept it with an humble and confident heart; and beholding the love of God and the Saviour, the misery of sin, he engages himself to "love much," to be humble and penitent, and to glorify God with pure motives, in body and in spirit. *Returned from the Holy Table*, it becomes his greatest care not to lose but to quicken the blessed convictions, feelings, sentiments and desires which the celebration of the Lord's Supper has worked in his soul. Meditation, thanksgiving for all he received, humble confession of what he had to confess, attendance at the prayer meeting, or on the preaching of God's Word, some religious book, discourse or hymn he considers useful, desirable and welcome.

And entering again upon the course of his daily labors and lawful amusements, he endeavors to remember often, wherever he may be, that he has *shown forth the death of the Lord;* so that it may constantly point him to the only source of eternal life, and remind him of the grounds of his trust, even in God through Jesus Christ as in the God of his salvation, and of the obligations which rest upon him not to live to himself, but to Him who died and is risen for him.

### Section XXIV.

VI.—The Working and Indwelling of the Holy Spirit: Proper use of it.

Admirable are the means which God has provided for the practice of Christianity which we have thus far contemplated; but let us not suppose that our

Heavenly Father was satisfied to give us these means, leaving the result of their influence to their intrinsic moral power. No; and this shows us anew His loving-kindness and grace. God joins to these means the powerful *working of the Holy Spirit*, by which they exercise a direct influence on the heart and conversation. This will be, *fourthly*, the subject of our meditation.

*Working and Indwelling of the Holy Spirit;* that is: The Gospel declares that through our Lord Jesus Christ we not only have the forgiveness of our sins, but that also He obtained the Holy Ghost to give the power of life to spiritually corrupt man. This Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of His Son, the Spirit of Christ. 1 Cor. ii. 11; Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 9. It is the Spirit that giveth *life*, Rom. viii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 6; that *reneweth*, Titus iii. 5; that *regenerates*, John iii. 5; *sanctifies*, 1 Cor. vi. 11; that imparts the gift of prayer, of faith, and other graces, Rom. viii. 26; 2 Cor. iv. 13. Those who are spiritually alive are said to be born of God, John i. 13; to be "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," Eph. ii. x. All who believe receive the Holy Spirit, John vii. 39; Acts ii. 38; Acts v. 32. The Gospel speaks of the Spirit of God and Jesus Christ as dwelling in all believers, as being sent forth in their hearts, to dwell in them as in His temple. John xiv. 16, 17; Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 9, 11; 1 Cor. iii. 16. As in nature every thing is animated and receives life by the breath of the Almighty, so the Holy Spirit imparts by means of the Gospel life

and action to man who is earthly minded and spiritually dead, in order to make him understand what he has to understand, and to feel what he must experience in his conduct towards God, and in approaching to Him. There is no doubt but many passages, in which the Spirit is spoken of, relate only to, or at least include, the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were imparted in the early ages of Christianity for particular purposes; see, for instance, Acts xix. 1-6; and I agree that when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, that the Spirit of God dwelt in them as in His temple, he alluded also to those peculiar gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit, which were seen among them, and was so many proofs of His dwelling in their midst. But it is just as certain that the Bible, in speaking of the Spirit, does not allude exclusively to these peculiar gifts and powers, but also to more common and less visible influence of the Holy Spirit which works in the corrupt man to this effect, that the Gospel finds its way to his heart, by enlightening his mind, by turning his will from evil to good, and by imparting strength and fitness to a continued and sincere practice of faith and godliness; for this we see by the promises of the Spirit to all following generations, as well as by observing that the effects, which are attributed in the Holy Scriptures to the Holy Spirit, not only consist in the gift of prophecy, of tongues, and miracles, but also in enlightening, renewing, sanctification, and consolation. Eph. i. 16-18; Eph. iii. 16; 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 Peter i. 22; Titus iii. 5; Acts ix. 31; Rom. viii. 26.

How often do we behold the most blessed results of this influence of the Holy Spirit! Men, who lived heretofore in ignorance, unbelief, debased in iniquity and sin, we see brought to an earnest reflection, a sensibility about their position, with a desire towards God in Jesus Christ, which they cannot throw aside, and which leads them daily to the throne of grace; we see them renouncing not only the service of sin in general, but sins to which they were formerly enslaved—we see them exposed to manifold temptations, and still stand by their changed opinions and sentiments; we see them, perhaps for a moment astray, still returning to God as their highest good, which they could not any more give up;—and when we see this, could we possibly ascribe such results in the moral world, merely to the influence of moral means, to favorable circumstances, to the power of our exhortations? Must the sight of such men, not convince us of the truth, *They were born of God!* They have received a germ of new life in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, which becomes the source of their religious actions, and which is nourished by the same Almighty who animates the natural world, and reneweth the face of the earth!

O, how adorable, good and gracious is God, whom it pleaseth to give with the Gospel and its preaching, that Divine influence on the heart of sinful men, such an invisible, animating, and penetrating power by which the seed of the Word of God falls as in good ground; in which it takes and spreads its roots, and brings forth abundant fruit! What a blessing is it

that God gives rain to the parched earth; but how much greater must we esteem that infinite proof of His love in giving the blessed influence of the Holy Spirit on the sinful, corrupt, insensible, averse, slow, indifferent heart of man, by which it is opened, quickened, and ready to bear fruit by the doctrine of the Gospel. What the rain is to the scorched earth, that is the Spirit to the human heart.

*Proper employ of the workings of the Holy Spirit.* Is the doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit, and His workings, based upon the Word of God; and not only that, but so well adapted to our wants, and such an adorable proof of the love of God; then certainly, nothing can be more dangerous for the true practice of Christianity, than to deny this doctrine, and despise with ingratitude and bold self-confidence, this powerful remedy for the recovery of our corrupt and fallen nature, which God in his lovingkindness pointed out to us, and which was obtained by the Lord Jesus Christ. Much more necessary is it to convince ourselves deeply of the truth of the doctrine, to rejoice in it, to acknowledge in all humility our need of the Spirit's influence, to pray for it always under the constant use of those means by which the Holy Spirit will work in our hearts. Luke xi. 13; Psalm cxliii. 10; Eph. i. 17, 18; Eph. iii. 14–18; James i. 5. *Secondly.* Whenever the Holy Spirit exhorts, advises, corrects, or drives us for good, by His word or by other means, we must not be obstinate or grieve Him, and strive against his exhortatious, advices, guidance, and drivings, by drawing our atten-

tion away from them; by going against their loud-speaking voice, and drowning it in the noise of the world; or indulge in sin by which we conduct ourselves unworthy and irreverendly towards the Holy One who dwells within us by His influence. Eph. iv. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 18–20. On the contrary, we must listen to his lessons, corrections, and admonitions; pay attention to his inward counsels and warnings, accept his guidance, walk after the Spirit, conform our conversation according to the desire of those new implanted principles, which are worked in us by the Holy Spirit, and through them mortify the deeds of the body, and crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. Rom. viii. 1, 5, 9, 12, 13; Gal. v. 16–26.

*Thirdly.* Do we excel in some particular gift of the Spirit which we have received; as for instance in the gift of knowledge, or strong faith, of freedom, or eloquence, and such like; then we must not be proud of these gifts, not despise others, but on the contrary, *think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith*, and all other gifts. Rom. xii. 3. We must stir up, nourish, and quicken the gifts we receive by exercising them, and making diligent use of the means by which the Holy Spirit generally works. 2 Tim. vi. 7. We must faithfully appropriate these gifts to the welfare of our fellow-men, and of the whole Christian society. 1 Peter, iv. 10, 11.

*Lastly.* We must do all this on the one hand with *humility*, recognizing with all our heart, our entire dependence on God and His Spirit; but on the other hand, with *courage* and *gratitude.* With

*gratitude* that God had not left us to ourselves, in our own depravity and weakness, but with *courage*, trusting in the help of Him who dwelleth in us, and who is stronger than all our enemies; "*strong*," therefore, "in the Lord, and in the power of his strength."

## Section XXV.

V.—Our access to God in Jesus Christ.—Prayer.—Private Devotion. Secret Prayer.—Family Prayer.—Singing.

Under this head we will meditate on another of those means which are of the greatest importance and influence on our growth as Christians, and therefore claim our particular attention. I allude to the privilege of approaching to God in Christ Jesus through prayer.

We have that access to God. Jesus Christ the righteous, suffered for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, and He is gone to Heaven to be our Advocate with the Father. By this the throne of God is represented as a throne of grace. Heb. iv. 16. As the Father of mercy, He has made that throne accessible for every one, without exception. We poor, miserable, unworthy creatures may boldly approach it through our Mediator. We may bring all our complaints, all our desires freely, to Him, and may trust that, for Jesus' sake, He will hear all our prayers, which are in accordance with His wisdom and love, for in Jesus "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Eph. iii. 12. Prayer is a positive command. 1 Tim. ii. 1–9; Phil. iv. 6; James i. 2–8. We are exhorted to pray with

freedom and confidence. Heb. iv. 16. Many places of Scriptures prove that God hears prayer. Deut. iv. 7; Psalms lxv. 2; xxxiv; cxvi. 1; l. 15; 1 John v. 14, 15. But what do we want more than the blessed and conclusive declaration of the Saviour himself, Matt. vii. 7, 8. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." O how assuring is it that Jesus has spoken this! and with what powerful reasoning does He affirm this promise, by addressing our own feelings: "Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

Blessed privilege! If a father, besides all the other means which he employs for their education, and instruction and growth, moreover speaks to them: "My children, you are always at liberty to come to me. Ask freely for instruction. Tell me your complaints. Claim my help when you need it. Enjoy my company. I am always ready to hear you, and to occupy myself for you." If he thus speaks, and proves to them by experience that he did not promise too much, tell me, what could he do more to promote their progress and advancement? Is not this daily access to Him one of the greatest means to

further their education? How condescending is our Heavenly Father therefore to us, sinful men, in admitting us freely and at all times to His throne of grace! O blessed privilege! He who calleth the stars by name, has left no obstacles for me on the way to His throne! I may approach to Him at all times: in the middle of night as on mid-day; at all places: in the humblest corner as well as in a temple! I can never come too often. I cannot ask too much, nor repeat too often. The more I ask the more I receive, the more acceptable it is in the sight of the great and bountiful Giver.

In order to profit by this privilege we must, of course, avail ourselves of it, and this we do by *prayer*. Prayer in that general sense, which comprehends the expression of the oppressed soul before God, the confessing of our sins, all kinds of petitions, and prayers for others, thanksgivings, and praises. Such prayer is of the greatest necessity, for

1st. What profit would we derive from the access to God's throne, if we did not use it?

2d. Prayer is appointed as the means, in order to receive. "Ask, and ye shall receive." "Ye have not," (says the Apostle James, chap. iv. 2) "because ye ask not." He, who would make use of all other means, and neglect prayer, would not be benefited by them. Prayer is the channel by which we receive our heavenly blessings. What food and drink is to the body, that is prayer to the soul.

3d. Prayer has a natural and moral influence on our illumination and improvement. God does not

need our prayer—but we cannot do without it. He who has learned to pray, has but to take counsel with himself to answer the question, whether he does not feel better or worse, tender or insensible, more or less fit for good impressions, zealous or slow in the practice of duty, in the proportion of his enjoying or neglecting prayer. All our ideas about God and heavenly objects are quickened, and impressed on our soul by prayer. It awakens and strengthens every variety of good sentiments in our hearts. We take those impressions and sentiments with us on leaving our bed chamber. They suppress the swelling waves of depravity. The thought: "Just now I prayed for forgiveness and sanctification," will certainly make us watchful against sin. Whereas, a man who never prays deprives himself of these happy results, is exposed to all kinds of sins, and resembles a city without walls to defend it.

4th. The most pious men were therefore, at all times, *praying* men; they considered prayer as the breath of their soul. Let me remind you of Abraham, Jacob, Solomon, Daniel, the primitive Christians, Peter, Cornelius, Paul, and the perfect example of our Saviour, who so often chose the solitude to engage in prayer.

But in order to derive all the benefit of this exercise which it is *possible* to give, we must form correct ideas *how* we have to pray; and with that view, we will speak first of

*Prayer in general*, not as a *duty*, but as one of the MEANS, *to assist us in the true practice of Chris-*

*tianity.* And shall we derive all the benefit of it as such, shall it be of a proper assistance in our progressing as Christians, it is easily understood that it must be more than the language of our lips, without our thoughts or our hearts having any part in it; something more than daily repeating words in which the soul has no part; something else than a hundred times, our Father which art in Heaven. To expect any happy result from our prayers, they must truly deserve that name; and this includes—

*First.* That we do not grasp some words in the air, but really address GOD, under a sense of His presence with us; the same as if we addressed a friend, with whom we are exclusively engaged.

*Secondly.* That what we pray for we ask with a sense of our need, and heartily desire and earnestly urge it; by presenting all the motives which lead us to ask, *pleading* all God's promises; not to determine Him to hear us, but to awaken *our own* zeal in prayer, and to derive the more spiritual benefit from it. Moreover, it denotes the true and peculiar expression of a heart that prays with a sense of its need.

*Thirdly.* That we pray with frankness, simplicity, and familiarity, so that in confessing our sins and our inward depravity, and in presenting all that troubles and oppresses us, we open our hearts before God without the least restriction; as a good child acts towards his father, and a friend towards the the friend of his soul, to whom he is not afraid to reveal the greatest secrets of his heart.

*Fourthly.* If we pray earnestly and heartily, we must also pray *constantly;* often repeat our secret prayers, and bear with us a praying heart, not giving up our request before it is granted. It is exactly this *constancy* in prayer which has such a blessed influence on our moral state and conduct. It is therefore recommended in the Holy Scriptures in the strongest terms. The Apostle Paul exhorts us, Rom. xii. 12, "to continue instant in prayer;" and 1 Thess. v. 17, to "pray without ceasing." The Saviour taught this expressly. Luke xviii. 1, and xi. 9.

*Lastly.* The Apostle Paul says, Phil. iv. 6, "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." Col. iv. 2. And I repeat it, with *thanksgiving;* for hereby give we the glory to God, prepare for ourselves the way to receive greater blessings, and obtain a deeper sense of our obligations, our gratitude, our hope and confidence in God, and our prayers become animated and quickened.

But perhaps many, after reading the above lines, may exclaim: "Alas! could I but always pray as here directed. To pray thus, I consider my duty, beneficial, and desirable; but how often do I feel myself so earthly-minded, so slow, so indifferent, so dull, so averse from prayer, that I cannot elevate myself to such a height! And such a complaint is not uncommon. Prayer is an exercise which cannot be desirable to our corrupt nature, which loves the world, dislikes all that is earnest, and is in itself

proud. But let me also remark, that we can greatly weaken the power of these sinful propensities, which hinder us in this exercise; and that the following directions may, under the assistance of the Holy Spirit, richly help us in rendering our prayer more spiritual, sincere, familiar, and beneficial.

Endeavor to conquer your averseness from prayer, by often remembering the advantages you may derive from it, and the danger to which you are exposed by neglecting it. Strive after more and more knowledge of yourself, of your misery, and manifold necessities. Contemplate often the certainty of the privilege of every sinner to come to God in the name of Jesus Christ. Doubt, in this regard, will produce timidity; timidity will create dislike.

And before you pray impress yourself with the thought: "The Lord is here—O my soul, remember that thou art in His presence, to offer prayer and praise to God in Heaven." Meditate, before bowing your knees, at least to some degree, the subject of your supplications or thanksgivings. Are you in a disposition for prayer—delay not;—but do you feel less disposed, the reading of a portion of God's word, a psalm or hymn, or any religious book, may enable you to this holy exercise. It may be well to commence our prayer with the confession that "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," and with humble supplication for the spirit of prayer: Rom. viii. 26, 27. If dullness should tempt you to postpone it to "another time," remember then that this surely is not the way to obtain a taste for prayer.

Rather approach God *just as you are*, and commence with the confession of your incapacity.

To promote your reverence, attention, and earnestness in prayer, seek solitude when you bow your knees solemnly before God. Pray at least so audibly that you can hear yourself, without being heard by others. Privacy about our secret prayers is always attached to sincerity. Pray in simple terms, as your heart dictates them, without seeking for well-arranged phrases, or nicely chosen words. For

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast!

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God can hear.

"*Prayer is the simplest form of speech*
*That infant lips can try;*
Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high."

HYMN 290.

Be not anxious about long speaking, Matt. vi. 7, 8, nor about strong, vivid, sensual excitement. This may be agreeable, but is not always to be expected, as there are many causes which may prevent that excitement of our feelings, even during the most sincere prayer. Those strong feelings are of less consequence than an intelligent perception of our necessities. Are you not able to pray as a man?

then pray as a child. Pray according to the gift you have thus far received.

Try to preserve the impression your prayer has left, watch with redoubled earnestness against the depravity and sin you have confessed, and pay close attention to the hearing of your supplications, which will strengthen your joy, your gratitude, and confidence in God's answering prayer.

Whenever you may say of yourself,

> "Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
> The Christian's native air,"

then be on your guard against the first steps to languor, which is often the commencement of long and pernicious neglect. Watch against a manner of life which may fill your heart with vain thoughts and render it unfit for prayer. He who has accustomed himself to "walk with God" in the midst of his affairs of daily life, has found the surest way to commune with God in more absolute prayer. Watch against indulging willingly in sins which might condemn your heart in approaching the throne of grace, and by which your prayers might be hindered. And have you committed some sin, yea, even the same which you have often already confessed and mourned before God, never, no never, make the foolish resolution to postpone prayer until you have first reformed yourself. No, seek that reformation without delay, from God through Jesus Christ; and remember that when we feel sorrow for our sins, when, accepting the merits of Christ, we desire to be changed as well as forgiven,

we are permitted to come to the throne of grace. And "Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." Psalm lxxxvi. 15.

PRIVATE DEVOTION.—By this we understand retirement in quiet solitude for the purpose of prayer and holy meditation, an exercise particularly commended by the Saviour, Matt. vi. 6: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly." To all pious men it has always proved a most desirable exercise, as we may learn from Isaac, Jacob, David, and others. Of Daniel, we read that he went into his chamber, and knelt upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God." The Saviour also has left us an example for our imitation. How often was a garden, a mountain, a starry sky, the silent witness of meditation and prayer!

And, indeed, such private devotions are profitable and necessary. We often have particular cares and troubles, which we cannot and may not disclose to men. We often have to confess particular sins and secret sins of our hearts, which we would not and could not confess in the presence of others. All such private cares and troubles and sins we can bring before God in solitude, but not in social prayer. Even the mere presence of others might hinder us; whereas, in solitude we can give free course to all our thoughts before God, without being restrained by

timidity, by fear of the remarks of men, or by desire to please them.

After the remarks about prayer in general, it is unnecessary to say any more on this point; I will only add that private devotion also includes *earnest meditation on important subjects of religion*, which, at the same time, may help us to prepare our hearts for the exercise of prayer. Such are meditations of God, His perfections, ways and works; of Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation; of the blessings we have received, the sins we have committed; on the coming of Christ, and our expectations in eternity. To engage in these meditations, we may read some part of Scripture, or of some religious writing, to elevate our thoughts towards God; and we will do well to select such a subject as may be most adapted to our wants, and to the circumstances in which we are placed.

*How often, how long, and when must these private religious exercises take place?* The Bible gives no direct precepts in this regard, and it could not well, if we regard the different positions in society we occupy. Still, those Divine commands: *to pray* WITHOUT CEASING, teach us that this exercise must be often repeated; whereas, at the same time the commandments of being faithful and zealous in our daily affairs, must prove that our times of meditation and prayer should not be so long and multiplied as to make us forget the duties of our vocation and of society. A mother, who should neglect the education of her children, and the cares of her household, in order to spend

the greatest part of the day in prayer and meditation, could not understand the meaning of this command, which specially aims to make her a more careful and more pious mother.

People, therefore, who have little business to attend to, must devote a greater part of their time to religious purposes than others who, in God's providence, are placed in a circle of much labor or occupation. In regard to the time—the morning and evening are certainly the most proper times to elevate our thoughts towards our Heavenly Father — but further, let us make use of this blessed assistant for our knowledge, faith, and godliness, whenever we feel most disposed for it, whenever we have some particular work before us in which we feel our entire dependence upon God. All further limited or superstitious stipulations are in opposition to the spirit and liberty of Christianity.

Ejaculatory Prayer.—By this I understand the same as when we read of Nehemiah, (chap. ii. 4) that he prayed unto God when speaking to the king Artaxerxes. It is that silent, short, but most sincere aspiration to God, for which we need not retire to our bed-chamber, or fall upon our knees, and which is the fruit of bearing a praying heart within us. So while listening to the reading of the Word of God, our silent prayer may arise: "Help me with Thy Holy Spirit to understand and to feel what I now hear." In our daily labor and occupation we may ask God: "Bless Thou the work in which I am engaged." When contemplating the works of nature, "O Lord,

favor me with a sensibility of the greatness, wisdom, and goodness, by which I am surrounded."

This is what is meant by *praying without ceasing.* And O how beneficial are these silent aspirations of the soul! By this we nourish our spiritual affections and sentiments, we defend ourselves against temptation by watching at the very moment of a possible attack, and render ourselves more and more fit for the higher duties of religion. The more heavenly minded we are in earthly things, the less earthly minded we will be in the heavenly!

*Family worship.* We must not only pray in solitude, or during our occupations, but also with the members of our household; to which must be added the reading of the Bible, and *singing.*

*Family worship* is certainly one of the most profitable institutions for the moral state of the different members of a household. They are hereby daily instructed through God's word, and reminded of their greatest interests, and most important duties. They receive impressions about God and religion which are daily renewed. The consciences are awakened and kept active. The taste for the study of the Word of God and His public service, is thereby revived and kindled. The heads of the family command thereby respect and esteem. Order, quietness, diligence, peace and mutual love are generally the inmates of such a dwelling. Children educated with such a family, retain in their hearts impressions of religion, which they never entirely lose in the years of temptation; and domestics, when establishing their own

household, not seldom follow the beneficial example of their former employers. Such families are blessed. They are temples in which God dwelleth, and to which He shows that He will honor those who honor Him.

Allow me here to show in the example of Philoteus, how such family worship may most profitably be directed. In his house every one rises early, and at the same unvarying hour you may find father and mother, children and servants, assembled for this morning exercise. A psalm or hymn, chosen in accordance with circumstances, is sung in simple solemnity. After this Philoteus reads with a plain and natural voice, such a chapter of the Bible as he considers best adapted to his hearers and their wants. Now and then he adds to this his own remarks and exhortations, or uses the notes of some commentator, or some other religious work, as we possess many, containing meditations on particular Bible-places or other useful subjects. This reading is followed by his prayer, in which he glorifies God in Jesus Christ for past mercies, and invokes a blessing on his family, strength and zeal in the fulfilling of their duties, and favorable direction of their life and lot. At the dinner and supper table, Philoteus leads in prayer and thanksgivings, and before retiring for the night, all the members of the house come again together and join in the singing of a psalm or hymn. Another chapter of the Bible is read, and these exercises are closed by thanking God for all the good with which He blessed them during the past day;

with confession of sin and asking forgiveness for Jesus sake; by commending to Him the interests of the church and country; by praying for them that suffer, and committing the whole family to the gracious care and Almighty protection of their Heavenly Father.

*Philoteus* takes proper care to vary his prayer, and never prays so long as to become tedious.

This manner of family worship is certainly worthy of imitation and most profitable; still in many a family it may not be an easy matter to follow it in every particular; and perhaps it will be found necessary to limit these exercises to the reading of the Bible and prayer, if not morning and evening, at least once a day. He who is not accustomed to pray aloud may do well to use in the beginning some well written prayers, until he will be able to commend his interest and those of his family, in his own words, in a *simple* and suitable manner.

*Singing.* We must practice singing as one mode of communion with God. Spiritual or religious singing is in fact nothing else than a different way of praying, thanksgiving, praising, and glorifying God. In the Old and New Testament we are often exhorted to sing to God. Psalms cv. 2. "Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him: talk ye of all his wondrous works." Eph. v. 19. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." See also Col. iii. 16. The Lord Jesus Christ has left us also His example in this regard, in singing with his disciples the usual

hymn at the close of the Paschal supper. And surely the singing of psalms and spiritual songs is a great assistant in our Christian growth. For 1st, *It exercises a happy influence on our mind.* Many important truths are thereby recalled to our memory, and enforced and impressed on the soil. In reading, we often see things and thoughts with a rapid glance, but in singing we are forced as it were to allow the necessary time for every thought to be understood, and felt, and preserved, and they must leave therefore more lasting impressions than by simply reading them. From this it follows, 2ndly, *That our heart will be more affected by it.* In the same proportion as our mind conceives an object distinctly and forcibly, our heart will be affected by it. Add to this the powerful influence of music. In the same manner as the tune of a hymn is solemn and earnest, melancholy and complaining, pleasant and joyful, in the same measure our hearts are moved and directed to reverence and earnestness; to sympathy, tenderness, mourning, or joyful praise.

*Singing* therefore *is*, 3dly, *very well adapted to transfer the soul from an unhappy state into a better one. Singing* recalls the soul from the distractions of the world, awakens it from dullness, indifference, and insensibility, and imparts courage, consolation and joy in God, to them that mourn and sit down in perplexity. Religious singing destroys evil thoughts and illusions; calms the troubled passions; restrains the power of lust, and brings peace and rest.

Lastly. *Religious singing is beneficial in its con-*

*sequences.* He who has become familiar with many of our psalms and hymns, by reading and singing them, will find out that his soul will be filled more and more with the thoughts they convey; and that appropriate verses or lines will be his welcome companions during his occupations in the different circumstances of life, in times of sorrow and of joy, in health and in sickness, and will not leave him alone even in the hour of death.

It is then not astonishing that pious men in all times, have paid particular attention to this religious exercise. We possess a treasure in the large numbers of hymns for private, social, as well as public worship; hymn books for Sunday schools and others. Look to the example of the first Christians and at the time of the Reformation. And why should we not follow in their steps? Why should not *singing* be to us a most desirable exercise, seeing the advantages we may derive from it, and remembering our obligation to praise and glorify God our great benefactor and merciful Father, and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath so infinitely loved us!

Remember, however, that it is important *how* we sing. Sing with judgment, not giving all your attentions to the melodies, but principally to the words which you are singing. Sing under the sense of God's presence, with reverence, with an edifying object and praying for God's blessing. Endeavor to sing with taste and feeling. Softness, sweetness, tenderness are more desirable than those loud over-

powering irreverent sounds which cannot claim the appellation of singing.

### Section XXVI.

#### VI.—Conversation with the wise and pious.—Useful Reading.—Religious society.

Among the means to bring us to the true practice of faith and godliness, our attention is called, *in the sixth place*, to the benefits we may draw from the *conversation, example, and workings of wise and pious men.*

Amidst the persons with whom we associate, we no doubt count some able men, who possess a correct insight into all that belongs to religion; pious men, filled with zeal for God and His service; excellent Christians, in whom knowledge, judgment, and tender earnestness, are happily united. How much may they contribute to our instruction, correction, warning, edification, and consolation! How beneficial may be their discourse, how powerful and encouraging their example! It is good to converse about heavenly things, with a true friend of Jesus, even should he go only abreast with us in the road of godliness. Is it not also a source of gratitude for us, that it has pleased God to stir up many of our fellowmen to use their talents, in writing useful books on the most interesting subjects? By this we have access, in the way of God's providence, to a number of excellent works which treat of different useful sciences, but above all about religion, and all that belongs to it.

To make a correct use of this blessing, we must

seek for a close association with wise and pious men and their writings. Their conversation is highly important. "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Prov. xiii. 20. David says: "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts." Psalm cxix. 63. By conversation with the wise and the good, we advance in knowledge, we are strengthened in faith, consoled in calamities; and how often do they give life and vigor to our good intentions, sentiments, and principles. Such was the experience of those disciples on the road to Emmaus, who were conversing together about Jesus, when the Lord himself went with them, and kindled their hearts in such a manner, that they afterwards confessed: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" Luke xxiv. 52. We must therefore, choose our friends among persons who love religion; and value it as one of the greatest gifts of Providence, if we find them.

This does not prevent us, however, from making a choice between different persons equally pious, and from attaching ourselves more intimately, to such as agree most with our character, taste, ideas, and feelings; whose company proves to us the most agreeable, and whom we find by experience, the most profitable for our head and heart.

The *diligent reading* also, of useful books, is necessary, if we will reap the benefits of these precious gifts of Divine Providence. Thus our religious knowledge

is extended and purified. Through their medium we are fortified in good, elevated under all the changes of life, and filled with renewed courage and hope. What profitable, and in the meantime agreeable exercise! The man who has taste for reading is never a burden to himself, but passes his time pleasantly. It is, however, not the same *how* we read. We must take care not to read so much as to neglect the duties of our occupation, or to embroil ourselves in glancing through all kinds of literature. We must not be in such a degree taken in by the wisdom of men, as to neglect the reading of the Bible. And above all, we must read with a proper object and judgment in our choice. Our object must truly be, to become wiser, more joyful, and better, and therefore we must select such books as will promise profit for the mind as well as for the heart; the counsel of learned friends, or of a pastor, will therefore prove a welcome guide.

*Religious society.* By what we have said before, as well as from what we read, Heb. x. 24, 25; Eph. Eph. iv. 29, it follows that Christians, in their conversation with one another, must endeavor to promote their mutual edification. And will this not be the wish and desire of all pious men? Will it not be pleasing to them to speak together about God and His service, about Jesus Christ and the Gospel, which are the most holy objects of their meditations?

Let me give you, in this regard, a few words of advice. And *first:* Let religion and the state of your own heart be often the subject of discourse with your *particular* and *pious friends.* Visit each other often

with that view. And *secondly:* Try to render all your conversation as much as possible profitable in *some* regard, not by dispensing entirely with everything else but religion, but by preserving a constant religious tendency in all your intercourse.*

* To this may be added our *Bible-classes*, our *monthly concerts*, and weekly *prayer meetings*, and divers religious institutions, which, regarding them only as *means* to help our growth as true Christians, are highly commendable. How well adapted are they to improve us in Biblical knowledge, and thereby keeping our mind more constantly employed with profitable subjects of thought and study. How powerful to kindle our hearts with interest for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, by witnessing the success, in a more detailed manner, of the preaching of the Gospel in heathen lands and distant countries. How proper to make us rightly estimate the unspeakable privileges we enjoy, above millions of creatures of the same God; and to promote kind and friendly feelings between Christians who are desirous to follow the Saviour's commandment in loving one another.

To profit by Bible-classes—(and here I address myself, in the first place, to young Christians, for whom they are principally intended,) it will be necessary to make up your mind before you take part in them, whether you are willing to attend them regularly, well prepared, and with the object of being instructed. In this manner it will assist you in learning to study the Bible; it will give you freedom and correctness of expression in speaking about religious subjects; you will render the task an agreeable one to your pastor, or the one who directs your meetings, and you are sure to spend an hour not only of entertainment, but of edification. In regard to attending prayer meetings, or any other religious meetings, let us never forget that religion is the service of God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord of lords and King of kings, and that whenever we are thus engaged, we should be so with the right feeling of *reverence*—not a reverence consisting merely in a visible modesty in our dress or actions, but reverence in our heart. Never attend them from a kind of habit, as the merchant often mechanically goes to 'Change, nor with the

SECTION XXVII.

VII.—The Works of Nature.

Nature also is instructive and elevating. This will be, *seventhly*, for a moment the subject of our meditations.

How beautiful, how full of instruction and profitable remembrance is the place on which we are educated for a better world! This we must not overlook. In visiting some institution for the education of young men, we would certainly pay attention to the locality which was provided for them, to the objects by which

view of showing your capacity in public prayer—but remembering the object for which you assemble, and that He to whom your prayers and praises are addressed does not look to the outer man, but searcheth the heart. There may be less necessity for those who have regular family worship to attend the weekly prayer-meetings; still how many are, from different circumstances, deprived of this privilege, and how well filled would be our meetings even if those only would attend who spend that same hour in indifferent, unprofitable occupation. In conclusion: If a prayer-meeting cannot be conducted by the pastor himself, the one who takes his place should come properly prepared; for it is desirable that *some* time be set apart to the reading of God's Word, accompanied with explanatory remarks or exhortation, *some* time to singing, and *some time* to prayer, that the one may link agreeably to the other. A series of prayers offered up, one in close succession after the other, can hardly be edifying. Prayer is the most holy exercise on earth, and except in our private devotions, we cannot give all our thoughts, all our soul, to unavoidable repetitions. Can they be acceptable to God? Sincere prayer brings us near to Heaven; the mere form of prayer must be abominable in the sight of God. Of how much importance, then, is the management of a prayer-meeting, which, if well directed, may so much contribute to our spiritual growth!

they were surrounded. Above us we behold a boundless sky, wherein the brilliant sun displays his Maker's glory, or wherein,

> "Soon as the evening shades prevail,
> The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
> And nightly, to the listening earth,
> Repeats the story of her birth;
> While all the stars that round her burn,
> And all the planets in their turn
> Confirm the tidings as they roll,
> And spread the truth from pole to pole."

Nature offers to the eye a panorama which enchants us by its various but harmonious colors, its diversity of objects and views. Wherever we are, in every tree, or leaf, or flower—in every animal, in the smallest insect, or wing, or feather—in every work of nature we discover a wondrous model of beauty, splendor, proportion, finish, and order.

Nature not only forms our taste and exercises a cheering and consoling influence on our souls, but is also instructive and elevating in two respects. *Firstly*, it reminds us at every step in its delightful path, of something interesting in regard to God: "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Rom. i. 20. Nature preaches to us in such a convincing manner, God's adorable wisdom, goodness, power and greatness, that it leads us to estimate but the higher the blessings of Divine grace. It is like a great volume which spreads before us in large cha-

racters the perfections of God. It is the first volume of His revelation, of which the Bible forms the second. But, *secondly*, nature is the more instructive because it reminds us of many important truths. This we owe principally to the frequent use the Bible makes of it, by borrowing in its parables and figures, from nature, to teach us the most useful lessons. So the Bible speaks of the frailty of life as a falling leaf, as the flower that fadeth, as grass which is cut down and withereth; of the faithfulness of God as of immovable mountains; of the blessed workings of the Holy Spirit as a beneficial rain. The Saviour in travelling with his disciples through the fertile or sterile parts of Judea, took occasion, from every striking object on the road, to present to them the greatest truths in parables. The seed, the diversity of soil, plants, trees, animals, birds, all served Him in their turn. Thus we find in nature instruction for every one—the poor as well as the wealthy. But to gain this instruction and elevation it is necessary that we should *observe* the works of nature. This observation the Holy Scripture recommends in words and by examples. David and others sung of God's glory, visible in creation, in most beautiful language; see Psalms viii., xix., lxv., civ., cxlvii., cxlviii., and others. And how would they have done this without *observing* it? The Book of Job is filled with contemplations of God's creation. The prophets often use figures which belong to nature. Isaiah commands: "Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these things; that bringeth out their host by number, he

calleth them all by names," Isaiah xl. 26, and the Saviour directed the attention of His disciples (Luke xii. 24–28) to the "ravens, which neither sow nor reap," to the "lilies, that toil not and spin not," and drew from them lessons of faith and consolation.

Let me therefore engage you to observe the works of nature. Try to obtain some knowledge of the works of God, in creation, in regard to their kind and beauty. Seek the country. Look at every thing above, beneath, and around you. Meditate in the solitude on what you have seen; and read, as much as your circumstances will allow you, such books as may make you acquainted with the works of God, in their order, splendor, utility, and beauty. Try to ascend, in all you behold, from the creature to the Creator. Reflect upon the truths which the objects or changes in nature may remind you of. Often contemplate nature in connection with the Bible, and read the Bible in connection with nature; for *thus* when you *behold* fields and mountains, cattle and fowls, you will *hear* Moses and the Prophets, Jesus and His apostles.

Thus nature assists us, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, in the true practice of Christianity—and reciprocally, in proportion as we have advanced in knowledge, faith, and godliness we will draw more benefit from the study of nature, and we will be more attentive, observing, and sensible to it. We will feel better the joy it imparts, because we receive it with a soul that rejoices in God. In every thing we will behold the works of our Heavenly Father, and in every attribute which is spread before us, we will re-

cognize a perfection which we must render profitable to ourselves.

SECTION XXVIII.

VII.—Providence.—Observance of the Ways of Providence.

Aside from the Book of Nature, is opened unto us the Book of Providence. This, *eighthly*, is one of the means which God has given for our Christian education. When, with the full belief that *the Lord reigneth*, we behold the actions and circumstances of those that surround us, we daily behold a scene of the adorable perfections of the grand Ruler of the world. We daily witness His *goodness* in the blessings He bestows on our fellow-creatures; His *mercy*, in the consolalation and help He affords to the miserable; His *long suffering*, in bearing with the most wicked; His *justice*, in punishing evil doers, in rewarding the good, in adjusting the cause of the oppressed, yea, in exercising the law of retribution, by which we not seldom suffer the same evil which we brought on others, or received the same good, in the visible way of Divine Providence, which we prepared for our fellow-men. In the same way we may daily observe in the ways of Providence the strongest proofs of God's *grace* and *power*, His *wisdom* and *sovereignty* and *unchangeable faithfulness;* so in regard to His Church in general, as in particular to them that fear Him.

But, all that happens around us will moreover remind us of many most important truths, such as the deplorable consequences of sin, the blessedness

and happiness of a pious life, the power of religion in adversity and at the approach of death, the vanity of worldly honor, rank, riches, and pleasures, the certainty, and also the uncertainty, of death; so that many voices seem to preach to us: *Remember thy destiny!*

From this we will easily understand that it becomes our duty to look attentively into the history of our daily life, *to observe the ways of Providence*, and to collect all the instruction it conveys, all the interesting facts it reminds us of. This exercise is recommended in the Holy Scriptures in several places. Psalms xlvi. 8, 9. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth." After meditating on God's providence over men in divers varieties of life, who seek refuge with God, the Psalmist concludes: "The righteous shall see it and rejoice. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord." And truly by going forward in this world with an observing spirit we profit for our mind and soul by circumstances which to others prove indifferent, and the truths which they quicken in our memory become deeper and deeper rooted. Under the co-working of our Lord's spirit many godly sentiments and dispositions are kindled and nourished in our soul; and we thus receive advice, light, consolation and courage in particular circumstances of our own. There are pious Christians who have themselves collected a treasure of instructive cases which

they observed in the history of others; and by remembering them at the right time, what benefit do they reap of it themselves, what profitable advisers and friends may they prove to be to their fellowmen!

Therefore do not neglect this exercise! Pay attention not only to great events, but also to the little circumstances in daily life! Meditate on the instruction you may derive from it, remembering, like David, "the days of old, meditatiug on all God's works, and musing on the works of His hands." See Psalm cxliii. 5. To widen the circle of our observations we may do well to read and study the histories of the world, the Church, of our country, of distinguished persons, of pious men, of interesting incidents in the ways of Divine Providence; but above all the history of the Bible, which most justly deserves the name of *History of Providence.*

### Section XXIX.

#### IX.—Divine Providence in regard to ourselves, &c.

We have now arrived at the last of the *means* in God's plan of our education, *His Providence in guiding and directing the events of our own life.* Truly, an interesting and agreeable subject, on which it will be good for us to meditate awhile. Let us observe how much we can find in the circumstances and events of our own life for our development and formation; and if anywhere, *here* we will be called to wonder at the manner of education of our adorable, wise, and merciful Father in heaven!

For the sake of order and clearness, it will be well to divide this subject into different parts, and to speak as among the ways of God's providence, of which must serve our education; *first*, of

*Contributing circumstances*, which I thus call because they contribute to the knowledge, the use and enjoyment of the means of grace, which God has provided, and through which we are brought to Him, and His service. One is born and educated in a pious family; another found with pious friends or relatives what he missed at home; a third met in his instructor a man, who, with his other lessons, sowed at the same time the seed of piety and godliness. Here is a man who, by some unforeseen circumstances, becomes the inmate of a circle of true friends of religion; there you behold one whom God provides with a friend that exercises a powerful influence over him for good; or again, marriage brings him together with just the person who can profitably lead him, and whose example invites him to follow her in the path of virtue and piety. Many are placed precisely in such a position in this world as was proper to bridle some prevalent sinful propensity, which, under other circumstances, might have caused their fall.

Singular are often the ways which bring people to God and His service. Cleonicus goes, according to his irreligious habits, every Sunday somewhere outside the city to amuse himself in some coffee-house, with his friends. An unexpected shower, which he does not like to receive on his Sunday coat, obliges him to take refuge in a church near by; and here

now he hears exactly the Word which penetrates deeply into his soul, and unites him to the service of the true God for the remainder of life. Crito, who never before looked into his Bible, becomes a boarder in a family of people, who commence their day by the reading of the Word of God. "They are better men than I," he meditates by himself. This has such an effect, that he opens his Bible, and the first words which meet his eye: *God is love!* make such a powerful impression on his soul, that from that moment he cannot withhold his heart from that God *who is love.* How many such contributing or leading circumstances, could we name! How many of my readers may be able to add one to their number! Perhaps, says one: "God has directed my lot in such a city where I heard just such a preacher as *my* heart needed." Or another: "By such or such peculiar circumstance, I met with a religious book, which appears to have been written only for me, and to that I am indebted for much heavenly instruction, consolation, for many an elevating thought." Let us observe in such blessed directions the hand of God's providence, let us thank His goodness and care for us, and endeavor to answer His kind object by improving the occasion which He freely offers.

2. *Sin-preventing Circumstances.*—I must speak *secondly* of such interviews or interferences in our life, as are visibly directed by Divine Providence to prevent some vehement explosions of our depravity, or some great sin which we are on the point of committing, and which we should have deplored all the

rest of our days. A striking example of this we find in the case of David with Nabal and Abigail, 1 Sam. xxv. Offended by the incivility of Nabal, David marches already at the head of four hundred men to take a terrible revenge. But behold the blessed interference of Providence! Unexpectedly, the noble and ingenuous Abigail is at his feet and addresses him so touchingly, and with so much tact, that his anger is calmed and he is forced to exclaim: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me: the God of Israel kept me back from hurting thee."

And can we not observe similar sin-preventing circumstances in the history of our own life? Are we anywhere secure against temptations by the power of our indwelling depravity? But how often, when we were on the point of committing some sin, there happened something which prevented us from accomplishing it and saved us! The unexpected arrival of some visitor, a friendly advice in due season, a fear that crept over us, an indisposition that retained us at home, a particular blessing of God which humiliated us, an affecting circumstance which awakened conscience, often some little incident that calmed our passions; these and similar interferences come in our way at the right time, to prevent greater transgressions. Let, therefore, our hearts be moved when we observe such interpositions; let us thank God for them; may they inspire us with courage in our warfare, and above all be heard by us as warning voices, whose counsel we will endeavor to follow.

3. *Trials.* *Trials*, which, *thirdly*, claim our attention, are those events in the history of our life, by which we are tried whether we are really the persons in word and deed which we profess to be, or for which we receive credit by others. We may gain some brilliant advantage, if we are willing to violate our conscience; we are brought into circumstances which impose difficult duties, or in which it costs much watchfulness and fighting to remain obedient to God. These are *trials;* and the more brilliant and flattering the temptation, the more difficult the duties, the more fierce the opposition, the more severe therefore, are the trials which we are called to undergo. A striking example of this we find in the history of Abraham, Gen. xxii., when God commanded him to sacrifice his only son Isaac, and to render to God an object dearer to him than anything on earth; a trial, not only of his obedience but also of his faith, as God had promised him, "in Isaac thy seed shall be called." Gen. xxi. 12.

No doubt but our heavenly Father, thus acting towards His children, is wise and good. By such trials they may learn the true state of their hearts, either to their humiliation and shame or to promote their joy and gratitude. By such trials they are called to examine with particular attention the foundation of their faith; called to weigh the obligations and advantages of obedience to God against the impropriety and the consequences of sin; and to reflect earnestly upon the choice they have to make. By such trials an occasion is afforded to them to exercise

their pious sentiments and determinations under opposition and strife; and thus exercising themselves, their faith and virtue receive vigor and strength; for our powers become stronger in proportion as we bring them into action. As the greatest soldier becomes a hero only by the battle, so the men eminent in faith and piety never would have attained their height, if they had not exercised themselves in the wrestling place of trial. This is what formed the Abrahams, the Josephs, the Peters and the Pauls of former and later times.

My brother, whenever you are therefore brought into lighter or severer trials; whenever your forbearance is put on trial by repeated revilings and injuries; your honesty, by having an opportunity of appropriating secretly what belongs not to you; your chastity, when you have to refuse the flattering tongue; your faith, when it appears from outward circumstances that God's promises cannot be fulfilled; your submission, by permanent and grievous calamities; whenever you thus have to pass through the school of trials, be not discouraged, but remember the lesson of the Apostle James: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." And his encouraging language in the 12th verse: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Remember, under trials, "It is the Lord who brought me into these circumstances; He looks

at me and beholds how I choose, how I act." And let this thought encourage you to behave manfully in the contest; and, trusting in God and the Saviour, to use your powers with all possible zeal and energy against the opposition to which the trial gives rise. Regard yourself with an impartial eye during and after such trying circumstances. And if the result be unfavorable, do not fear to confess it—let it lead you in penitence to God. Seek the appropriate remedy for the malady. And should the result be favorable: be joyful, be filled with gratitude towards your Father in Heaven, and let it encourage you, looking up to God, with whom there is strength, not to be overcome with fear whenever He calls you again to a difficult duty or a dangerous post!

4. *Mercies and Rewards.* By *mercies* we must understand such blessings as God gives us in his infinite love, without regard to our conduct; but there are blessings which He bestows as rewards, as the marks of his satisfaction of the good actions we perform.

In regard to the first, who can name the *mercies* which we daily receive from his bountiful hand? Health, refreshment by sleep, food, clothing, dwellings, comforts, enjoyments, prosperity in our occupations, in our enterprises, in our children, family-joys, the pleasures of friendship, unexpected events which have a favorable influence on our circumstances. O how good is God! And with these gifts how much preservation from dangers! How much forbearing in retarding His chastenings! How much sweetness

which He mixes in our cup of suffering! How much consolation and bearing up in calamity! How much deliverance from mourning and misfortune! And all this in other ways than we could have expected, so that we therein must recognize the hand of Providence! And why all these mercies? Is it not to affect our hearts, to render us thankful, to make us recognize in God our best friend, to make us willing to trust ourselves to His guidance, and to render the school in which He has placed us the more agreeable? Just as a kind father or teacher likes to prepare some enjoyment for his children or pupils, and show them his love, in order to win their whole heart, to augment their willingness to receive instruction and advice, and to make them pass their course of study in an agreeable manner.

These and other blessings, God sometimes bestows upon us as *rewards*. As a father engages his children to be diligent, obedient, and virtuous, by showing them the happy results they will thus secure themselves at the end of their study, and by presenting them with some welcome reward or honorable premium; even so acts our Heavenly Father towards *His* children. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him:" Heb. ii. 6. God not only directs us oftentimes in His Holy Word to that glorious crown which is laid up for all that seek glory, and honor, and immortality, and which they will receive when their course shall be finished; but often he rewards their faithfulness and conduct al-

ready in this present life, and this not only by the happy natural consequences of acting well; but moreover by *absolute rewards*. The histories of Noah, Lot, Joseph, David, and Daniel, may sufficiently prove this. And how often do we behold it yet that the labor of the honest is blessed, that the merciful finds mercy in the hour of need; that the misjudged innocent is at last honorably restored to his rights, that a noble but tormented husband finds kindness and love in a second marriage, that good children find afterwards their consolation and staff in their own children? How much could we multiply these examples? Among these rewards, we must not forget to name, however, the hearing of our prayers, and the fulfilling of Divine promises to those who trust in them. In how many instances did we experience it, that when coming to God with our cares and praying for such things as we are free to ask Him, in submission to His will. He gave us so exactly the desire of our soul, that we are constrained to say: "I love Thee, O God, for Thou hearest the voice of my supplications!"

And what are these things if not rewards of Divine Providence, bestowed upon us as honorable proofs of God's approbation to encourage us to go on in doing good?

As to the use we have to make of these mercies and rewards to promote our Christian education, we must, *in the first place*, observe them, observe them as blessings from God, so that we acknowledge before

Him: "I will praise Thee forever, for Thou hast done it." Psalm lii. 9.

*Secondly*, they must inspire us with *gratitude and love to God.* It is precisely this gratitude and love which promote our spirituality and which make us willing to appreciate and to obey the Lord's will. Thus a child loves more and more his father, and the pupil his teacher, by the tokens of kindness they receive.

They must, *thirdly*, inspire us with *confidence in God.* By showing his love, the father becomes the best friend of his child. The teacher gains his pupil's confidence by love. Thus the lovingkindness which God shows to us must gain our confidence and bind us to Him as our best friend.

*Fourthly.* The blessings of God, taken as *rewards*, must produce in us the same effect which rewards have with children or pupils. They must *encourge* us in well-doing, in doing what is good. The fruit which we reap from acting right, must show us the fruits which the same deeds always will produce, and therefore encourage and kindle our zeal. They must kindle our ambition to gain more and more proofs of God's approbation. They must be a seal to us that God also hereafter, according to His promises, "*will render glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good.*" Rom. ii. 7, 10. For our encouragement we may confidently look to these rewards, not as though we had a right to claim them; (nothing is more unbecoming than a proud confidence in our own merits;) but with an humble feeling of the littleness

and imperfection of our best works. God declares in the gospel that He forgives our sins by grace, for Jesus' sake, and that, although not bound to do so, He will reward from motives of free kindness, our imperfect works, in a manner which far surpasses their value; this is the ground on which we, imperfect men, who daily offend in many things, can hope for *reward.*

*Lastly.* In order that the salutary results of received blessings and rewards may be the more lasting, we must recommend the practice of the pious men of ancient times, who *kept such mercies and remarkable incidents in their lives in remembrance by some particular sign or act.* When the Lord appeared to Jacob at Bethel, as we read in the 28th chapter of Genesis, so that Jacob was brought to confess, "Surely the Lord is in this place," he took a stone "and set it up for a pillar," as a lasting memento of what had happened to him. The same we find recorded of Moses and Samuel. And it will be well for us, in receiving particular mercies, rewards, answers to our prayers, deliverances or help, to keep them in constant and heartfelt remembrance, by recording them for ourselves in writing, or by setting up like Jacob, some kind of a pillar, which may preach to us, as so many Ebenezers, the lovingkindness of the Lord, and promote our gratitude and confidence in Him *from whom all blessings flow!*

5. *Calamities and Chastisements.* Of these we must speak in the *fifth* place. The road to Heaven is often a road of crosses and sorrow, and in those

crosses we discover the moulding hand of Infinite love.

*Calamities* are such sorrowful events or circumstances as have no particular connection with particular sins, but are inseparable from our life here below. By *chastisements* we must understand such calamities or sorrowful evils as God sends upon us *for our sins*, with the kind object to correct us. That David was strongly persecuted by Saul, was to him *a calamity* which he innocently suffered; but when he had to bear afterwards the bitter afflictions in his own family, we see in them the *chastisement* which he justly deserved for the evil he had brought over the house of Uriah. Often it pleases God to lead us through life by rough and uneven roads. Loss of fortune, employ, or situation, poverty, calumny, hatred, contempt, oppression, bodily sufferings, unfaithfulness of friends, unhappy marriages, sorrow over children, bereavements of our dearest relations by death . . . . . Who can name the manifold sorrows of the world, sorrows which do not spare the pious, for even the adversities *of the righteous are many.*

God afflicts us with calamities, and not seldom he corrects us with chastisements. How often have we to suffer in the ways of Providence, in a visible manner, for sins which we still foster. How often do we observe the chain which links our calamities to our sins. How often do we see thoughtlessness, falsehood and calumny paid by disagreeable embarrassment and quarrels; baseness, prodigality, and in-

attention, by cares and want; rashness by inquietude; negligence in education by the most painful grief over children's conduct. How many instances could we name of this kind, even among the pious, who are also guilty of many of these sins. Thus Abraham was chastened for his insincerity, Jacob for his deceit in regard to Esau, Hezekiah for his pride, and David, more than once, for sins which he committed, and which were so many dark spots on his piety. Who remembers not the chastisements which came upon Zacharias, or Peter, or Paul and others.

Be careful, my suffering friends, not to consider these means as hard and unkind. No, they are worthy of the greatest wisdom, of the most tender love. Thus acts a good father towards his children, a wise instructor towards his disciples. The school of suffering is highly necessary to our education. We are like many objects in nature. The same stones which, in the soft gliding rivulet, remain undisturbed in their original and rough state, become round and polished and brilliant if swept by the powerful stream, along rock and stone, constantly onward through slip and sand, mutually polishing one another. Gold becomes pure, in proportion as the heat of the furnace is increased. The plough improves your corn-field. The most penetrating liquids purify the most, and the most bitter and distasteful medicines are often the most sanatory. God afflicts and chastens you with the best, the most fatherly intentions to bring you to Him and to His service, or to purify you from all evil, and to prepare

you for that degree of perfection to which you are called. Read, and read again the interesting and consoling passage in Heb. xii. 5–11. "Blessed," say the maker of the 94th Psalm, "blessed is the man whom thou chasteneth, O Lord, and teacheth him out of thy law." And David must confess: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." Ps. cxix. 67, 71.

*Calamities and chastisements are the proper means to make us earnest and careful.* Many who in time of prosperity refused a listening ear to the sincerest and most kindly warnings, are ready to receive them, and are affected by them, when confined to a bed of sickness, in the presence of a dying friend or mourning over the death of some dear relation! Where does the minister of the Gospel meet with more willing hearers than under the roof of sorrow and tears?

*Calamities and chastisements must convince us of the vanity of worldly good, and the necessity of seeking our happiness only in God and His service.* If every thing goes smoothly, as we desire it, our heart becomes easily over-attached to visible things, to worldly treasures, to rank and honor, to earthly pleasure, to relatives and friends. But the sad experience of the instability of worldly honors and riches, the vanity of pleasures, the brevity and uncertainty of the lives of our friends and of ourselves, this sad experience is most proper to convince us that we would profit nothing by it if we could *gain the whole*

*world and lose our own soul;* and that true and lasting happiness can exist only in having God for our portion, in being reconciled unto Him through Jesus Christ, and living in his communion and service. How many will then be in Heaven who are graciously led thither by no other path than a thorny road!

*Calamities and chastisements constrain us to humility and watchful fear.* Sorrows and fears awaken our conscience. They lead us to search our hearts for the thing that displeases God. They refer us to our sins, as was the case with the brothers of Joseph at the time when they remembered the evil they had done to him, and their language was: "*therefore* is this distress come upon us." Gen xlii. 21.

They not only refer us to our sins but also to their deplorable consequences. They teach us, *by experience*, how wrong and bitter it is to sin against God; and thus we obtain a much deeper conviction of the odious and horrible character of sin than can be gained by mere contemplation. Chastisements direct us to consider God's *holiness.* We behold by them that however good and merciful, He is not the less a *holy* God, who abhors sin and "who without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's works;" and we therefore must "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." See 1 Peter i. 15–17.

And as the chastisements may leave, under the influence of God's Holy Spirit, deep impressions of these things in our soul, are they not well-adapted means to bring us with deep-felt humility before God and to inspire us with true abhorrence of sin?

But again, *Calamities and chastisements are apt to bridle certain vices and to kindle opposite virtues. Pride* for instance is brought low by humble circumstances; the tendency to *intemperance and sensuality* by pain and sickness, by sober means, or by want of occasion and means to satisfy inordinate lusts. The *ungrateful* and *dissatisfied* values the blessings He receives from God the moment he loses them, and then learns to be satisfied with what he has. And whereas prosperity often makes men rely on themselves and act independently of God, so the strokes of adversity convince them of their entire dependence on Him and teach them to commence all their undertakings by looking up to God for His blessing. Never are we more sensible of the misery and want of others than the moment we ourselves suffer. And what can render us more prayerful than *necessity?* Unbroken quiet and prosperity, render us formal and inattentive in our private devotions; but if we meet with disasters and sorrows on our road, our prayer becomes tender and quickened. We find then constantly motives to call earnestly unto God, and we feel the necessity of casting our cares on a loving Father.

Moreover, *Calamities and chastisements give us the opportunity to exercise several virtues, and to improve Christian graces by practice, which we could not under other circumstances.* Meekness, long-suffering, patience, submission, trust in God, are virtues and adornments of the Christian, which shine forth only in days of darkness, suffering and tears. They

give occasion to strengthen our confidence in God and His promises, and to observe the undeniable proofs of His wisdom, power, and goodness, in sustaining and delivering those who serve Him.

Lastly, *Calamities and chastenings serve to impress upon us that this earth is not our home; to loose us from the world and make us long for Heaven.* When Moses came into Egypt to lead the Israelites into Canaan, his message was welcome news in their ears on account of the oppression under which they suffered; but had he found them in a state of prosperity, as in the days of Joseph, it is doubtful whether they would have been willing to follow him.

Mourners in the school of pain and suffering, may these considerations bring you relief and consolation; but at the same time *try to benefit by them.* "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." 1 Pet. xii. 11. Let it, therefore, never become your policy, to harden yourself against the calamities which befall you; but observe in them the hand of God who ruleth; and regarding them constantly in this light, bear them with calmness, courage, patience, and submission. Observe with attention the lessons which those calamities or chastisements convey, under prayer for instruction from your Father in Heaven. Remember that the Divine object is no other than to make us behold our sins, to humiliate us, and to restore and heal us.

Pray that this object of God may be accomplished in you. Search closely why you *suffer*, and why you *thus* suffer, and this perhaps already for *a long period;* and what the sins may be which must be corrected. And when you discover the thing that displeases the Lord, confess it before Him, seek refuge in the Blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, and resolve, in His strength, to watch and to strive with zeal and vigor against the sins which have been pointed out.

We have thus contemplated some of the ways which Providence uses in our education. Of each one in particular, I have stated in a few words how we must use them to our benefit. There is one exercise however which regards *all*, and which I desire to recommend. It is *the remembrance of these ways.*

*This remembering of the ways in which God has led us thus far through life*, consists herein: that we recall to our memory as much as possible every event in the history of our life, beginning from our earliest days. We have much to reflect upon; our parentage, our childhood, education, encounters and incidents in more advanced age, our position in society, our dwelling-place, engagements with others, our experience in regard to the interests of our soul, the means of grace which God provided for us, leading or contributing causes to bring us to God, sin-preventing interferences, trials, blessings, happy changes in our lot in the world, answered prayers, rewards, calamities, sorrows, and chastenings. On

all this we must reflect with calmness, with interest, with prayer to God to make us pause at such incidents or circumstances in our history, by which we may profit for the present and future days.

This exercise is recommended in Holy Scripture. Deut. viii. 2, 3. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness." Compare Deut. xxxii. 7, Psalm cv. 5. David would declare before God: "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works." Asaph confessed the same, Psalm lxxvii. 12, 13. Jacob has left us herein a worthy example, see Gen. xxxii. 10, and many others. This exercise has many advantages for our soul.

For *firstly*, it will lead us with gratitude and adoration to God by observing the *good* we have received. Read the Psalm xviii. and you will see why David could conclude: "Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, and sing praises unto thy name."

*Secondly.* It will promote our *humility* in renewing our depravity and sins under the kind dealings of Divine Providence. Genesis xxxii. 10; 2 Sam. vii. 18.

*Thirdly.* It will assist us in preserving the lessons which the different ways of Providence has taught us, and maintain the impressions which they have left in our hearts. For instance, if we have confidence in the hearing of prayer, because we have the experience that God has answered us, then it follows that the *remembrance* thereof will often lead us to earnest and faithful prayer. And if we have received particular proofs of God's power, mercy, or faithfulness,

the *remembrance* thereof will strengthen our trust and hope in that same God under difficult circumstances. Thus the remembrance of former experience of God's help and faithfulness, enabled David to say: "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." 1 Sam. xvii. 37. And Paul: "In God, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."

*Fourthly.* Pious impressions and feelings which we derived from the dealings of God with us, may grow dim and faint; but then the *remembrance* of our former happy state is most appropriate to make us deplore our loss, and to quicken in us the desire to become again what we once have been. Psalm xlii; Job xxix. 2, 3; Ps. lxxxix. 49; and

*Lastly*, we draw from this exercise, and in general from the observation of the dealings of Providence, a treasure of *experience*, or: "that knowledge and ability which we obtain by it." A treasure of knowledge in regard to ourselves and of God, His perfections, His ways, and other important truths. How important that knowledge, that experience! What influence may it exercise on our faith, hope and godliness! What a valuable companion and guide on our road through life, to assist us with lessons of wisdom and precaution, and to become the beacon, counsel, and consolation of our fellow-men.

PART III.—OF THE WARNINGS AND WEAPONS WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR OUR CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

In the second part of this Chapter we have seen that God has provided manifold and most excellent means and helps to bring us to the true practice of Christianity, and to progress in the path of Christian perfection. But, as we stated in Chapter III., we encounter in this world also manifold occasions to sin, which are in constant opposition to our Christian growth. But here, again, God has provided us with warnings and weapons, which, correctly used, may, with the assistance of His Holy Spirit, disable and destroy the power of that evil which opposes us.

These warnings and weapons, as shown to us in the Word of God, are exceedingly appropriate and all-sufficient. The Holy Scriptures prescribe a manner of defence which every man, *naturally*, would follow if attacked by powerful and deceitful enemies. This manner of defence against our spiritual enemies, this counsel of God, will, I think, be found in the following *precepts*.

SECTION XXX.

1ST PRECEPT.—Know that you are in constant danger, and fear it.

"Happy is the man," says Solomon, Prov. xxviii. 14, "that feareth always." Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, Rom. xi. 10, "Be not high-minded, but fear;" and after citing some warning examples to the Corinthians, he concludes: "Wherefore let him that thinketh that he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. And truly, how can we keep

ourselves from dangers if we do not know them? He that is ignorant of being in a road where many snares are set for his foot, goes carelessly on and falls. To disregard the enemy is the shortest way of securing to him the victory. Do you desire not to be led astray from the true practice of Christianity, then make yourself acquainted with the dangers, temptations, and occasions which lead to sin, wherewith this practice has to wrestle, as we have shown in Chapter III. Apply this knowledge to your own case. Do not consider these dangers of small importance; but on the contrary, live under constant impressions of their immense number, their greatness and power, as well as of the deep depravity and weakness of your own heart, which requires so little to fall by temptation. Even then, when *you think to stand;* when you observe considerable progress in your overcoming sin; when your heart is tender, elevated, quiet, and enjoys heavenly consolation; even then forget not the dangers which at every moment surround you, nor consider yourself safe, by your present virtue, against future temptation. Peter wept bitterly for a moment of carelessness! Nothing is more changeable or unsteady than our heart. A dead calm is often the forerunner of a terrible storm. Never are we nearer to our fall than the very moment we suppose that there is nothing for us to fear.

SECTION XXXI.

2D PRECEPT.—Make it your earnest and sincere resolution to stand and to conquer.

This is considered necessary in the Holy Scriptures, if we will be preserved against the power of sin and temptation. The Bible requires us *to be perfect with the Lord our God, in integrity of heart and in uprightness;* firmly decided in our choice, if we wish to be His; (see Deut. xviii. 13; 1 Kings ix. 4;) *to be upright*, and *to be innocent of great transgressions*, is put down together, Ps. xix. 13, and xxv. 21, where David prays, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me." The Saviour desired no other disciples but those that came willingly, and with the fixed determination to follow Him. "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Luke ix. 62. He required this sincerity and determination, because, without them, we would not be fit to combat and to overcome the difficulties we meet in the path of life. Nothing is easier understood. Or what can be expected of an army that secretly favors the cause of the enemy, or at least is not decided, in sincerity of purpose, to obey the commands of its general, and to risk all in order to secure the victory? Thus it is in *spiritual* warfare—in order to conquer, we must be *willing, determined* that the victory shall be ours. Shall we we derive, therefore, the proper benefit from the following precepts, we must commence by inquiring of ourselves: Am I sincere? Do I desire, in earnest,

the victory? Am I on the Lord's side, or secretly in favor of the enemy? Is it truly my object and determination to remain faithful to God and His holy service, or have I secretly planned to surrender myself to the enemy, or at least to enter into some arrangement? Make this inquiry, and be careful to dismiss all double-heartedness and insincerity; but may *your heart, in all uprightness, be perfect with the Lord your God!*

### Section XXXII.

3d Precept.—Be ready, by providing yourself in time with weapons.

"Take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." Eph. vi. 13. "Act as soldiers would act, who, *before the battle*, supply themselves with the necessary arms and ammunition, and take care to be ready, whenever the enemy ventures an attack. Provide yourself in time, with all the spiritual means of defence, which God has given you; so that in the evil day, the day of danger and temptations, you may not be taken by surprise, but be able to withstand; and having done all that was necessary in the battle, you may keep the field as conquerors." And what are the spiritual weapons which we have to procure before the battle engages? The apostle enumerates them, as he continues in verses 14–17: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, where-

with ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Without enlarging on the *figures* used in this beautiful passage of Scripture, I will content myself with calling your attention to six weapons which thereby are recommended.

*The first weapon is the knowledge of the truth.* By diligent study and meditation, we must extend our knowledge of the truths of the gospel, believe them, and become familiar with them. This is an excellent weapon against temptation and sin. By filling our soul entirely, as it were, with the words of the gospel, we will feel much more safe against doubts and objections; experience its powerful influence on the regeneration of our heart; become habituated to foster pure and holy thoughts, and lay up a treasure of ideas which we can call to our assistance whenever sinful passions and thoughts are ready to assail us. Almost every truth of the gospel has some tendency to fortify the soul against sin; but, as successful weapons in our warfare we may recommend, "*Repeated meditation of God and His perfections*, after the example of David, whose language it was in the 16th Psalm: "I have set the Lord always before me;" *the vivid representation, in particular, of God's omniscience, and presence at every place; the contemplation of the Cross of Christ*, or the meditation of His sufferings and death, as an atonement for sin; *the considering of the miserable consequences of sin and the loveliness of virtue and pity; the attentive*

*consideration of the vanity and uncertainty of earthly things; the thoughts on death*, which led a Moses to pray, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;" and lastly, *the constant remembrance of the uncertainty of Jesus coming;* according to His own advice, Luke xii. 37–40, "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of men cometh at an hour when you think not."

O, my reader, if our hearts were always filled with these truths; if we ever endeavored to live under vivid impressions of the majesty, dominion, holiness, justice, goodness, grace, and all-sufficiency of God; if at all times the thought was before the mind, "God is here!—Here with me—He knows at this very instant what I am thinking, speaking, doing, desiring;" if we often contemplated our gracious Saviour in His bitter sufferings and death, with the thought, "God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"—"Herein is love, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us;" if we often would contemplate the misery that follows sin, the vanity and frailty of all that the world can give, and behold against that the never-ending blessed fruits of godliness; if we often addressed ourselves: "Remember to die"—"It is appointed unto men once to die; but after this the judgment"—"Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." If we thus thought about death in its circumstances and consequences; thus contemplated the coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead, not only in all its

terrible magnificence, but also in regard to its uncertainty, HOW GREAT, my Christian reader, would be the blessed influences of these constant meditations and thoughts on our hearts and conversation in the world! How would they engage us in well-doing, and inspire us with carefulness and boldness against the sins which so easily beset us!

The *second weapon* we must put on is *righteousness*, which means here virtue and godliness, the constant striving to fulfill our obligations. We have but to go on in completing our sanctification in the fear of God, using the means thereto which God has given us. We not only obtain in this manner a greater degree of holiness and virtue, but the occasions to sin, finding us thus armed, ready for defence, and engaged in doing good, will affect us but little by their seductive charms.

The *third weapon* the Apostle calls *the preparation of the Gospel of peace*, which means, in our opinion, "that willingness and readiness to the warfare which we ought to derive from the Gospel." The more knowledge we obtain of the excellency and saving grace of the Gospel doctrine, the more ready we will be to sacrifice all for it, the more willing to defend it and to suffer for it. A Christian ought therefore often to contemplate in its consoling, illuminating, and salvation-bringing aspects that Gospel after which he wishes to live. He ought to be deeply impressed with the truth, that we do not too much, by having our all at the disposal of the glorious Gospel. This will animate him to combat with courage not only all

temptation, but even the menaces and oppression which tend to draw him away from his beloved object; for just this ambition, this enthusiasm for the gospel cause, this readiness to sacrifice all for it, is one of the most successful means to make him victorious over his enemies.

As a *fourth weapon*, the Apostle recommends *the shield of faith*, of confidence in God and in His Son Jesus Christ. That is, a trusting in the power, love, faithfulness, and promises of God and Jesus, whereby we know that they will not leave us in the hour of need. Will you see the strength of that faith, in striving against the most powerful opposition, read then, my Christian friends, the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Moreover, the case is very clear indeed: the man of little courage and full of fear makes a poor soldier. On the contrary, possessed of courage we feel ourselves strong. And what can inspire the Christian with more courage and strength than confident faith in God and our Saviour, than the thought: "I will not war alone. Fear not, my soul, in the presence of thine enemies. The Lord is on thy side. He promised thee His help. By Him thou shalt surely conquer."

In the *helmet of salvation* we have the *fifth weapon*. To enable us to stand against evil, we will find a powerful assistance in the well-founded hope, and in the strengthening of that hope within us, of receiving that crown of eternal life which is promised to every faithful warrior. For if this hope is quickened within us, "This warfare shall not be forever. At

the end of my course is kept for me the most glorious prize. Soon I will forever enjoy in Heaven a blessed happiness, which will not only make amends for the fight we have to fight here below, but far exceed all the ideas which human imagination can conceive." When this hope dwells within us, is there any opposition which we cannot overcome?

The *last weapon* which we are recommended to procure in time, is *the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.*

God's revealed will, as contained in the Holy Scriptures, is full of declarations which are most profitable to keep us from sin in general, and from many sins particularly expressed. We must gird ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, and this consists herein: not only that we acquaint ourselves with the principal contents of the Bible, but also that we familiarize ourselves with and commit to memory, declarations, lessons, promises, warnings, proverbs, from God's holy word; so that we may remember them in the hour of temptation. David used these weapons, as we see by the 119th Psalm; see verses 11, 15, 16, 24. But how much louder speaks here the example of the Saviour, who, according to the 4th chapter of Matthew, used these means with the greatest readiness to defend himself against the snares of the tempter. IT IS WRITTEN! was the weapon which the enemy met with at every attack—IT IS WRITTEN, completed his defeat!

### Section XXXIII.

4th Precept.—Do not seek the contest, but evade all occasions to sin, wherever you can.

That man is not truly a hero, who, because he is well prepared for the battle, presumptuously and desperately seeks for the fight which he could and ought to have escaped. True heroism never runs a risk where it is not necessary; but once called to war, it shows itself in awaiting and resisting the enemy with courage, boldness, and intrepidity. Thus it is with the Christian. Although prepared with the armor of God, he does not expose himself to dangers which may bring him into a most difficult conflict, but evades the contest as long as his duty and calling will permit him to do so. There are many occasions and causes of temptation and sin which we can evade. Of these I will name a few.

*Firstly. Be on your guard against idleness.* Idleness is the mother of manifold sinful thoughts, vain imaginations, and disorderly passions; whereas an active life does not leave time to the soul to reflect upon the rising evil thoughts, but constantly fixes its attention on different objects.

*Secondly. Guard yourself against excess, and in general against a luxurious manner of life.* A man may not be a drunkard or a glutton, and still make a more prodigal use of drink and food, of sleep and different comforts of life, than correspond with the object for which God provided them. This is very pernicious to the soul. We are particularly warned

against it: Luke xxi. 34; Romans xiii. 14; Eph. v. 18; &c. Excess and intemperance are the cause of idleness and indispositions of the body, which create maladies of the soul.

Immoderate indulgence confuses the mind, weakens the memory, corrupts the acuteness of our judgment, excites the sinful lusts, renders the soul indolent, indifferent, and unfit for the labors, particularly the spiritual exercises, to which it is called. The same effects are produced by a weakly, delicate manner of life; except that besides this all, it renders us unfit to bear the troubles, sacrifices, and sorrows to which the Christian, on account of his warfare, has to submit. We must learn privation, labor, and sacrifice in smaller things, in order to enable ourselves to endure greater hardships to which we, as Christians, may be called.

*Thirdly. Take heed not to entangle yourself in the business and pursuits of this life, nor to be ensnared with the cares of this world.* To take proper care for our temporary welfare, by diligence, economy, attention, and order, is nothing more than a Christian's duty; but every thing has its limits, which in regard to this diligence and care are not seldom passed over. Many, to promote their prosperity in this world, are engaged in so many affairs which claim their whole person and time, that they cannot find a moment for occupations of a higher order. Others are entirely taken up with cares and anxieties for their temporal welfare, and run with their thoughts into the future as to what they will eat and drink,

and wherewithal they shall be clothed. In regard to the first named, what is more inconsistent with care for the soul and the service of God? What separates our thoughts further from invisible and heavenly things? And as to the latter, it cannot be otherwise but that those unlimited cares and anxieties disturb the tranquillity of the soul, fill it with earthly thoughts and oppress it to such a degree as to make it unfit for spiritual and heavenly occupations. "He that received seed among the thorns," says the Saviour, "is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." Matt. xiii. 22. Compare John vi. 27 and Matt. vi. 19–21. The Christian should then be diligent in all that his hand findeth to do, but further let him intrust his temporal interests to the providence of God, "who careth for him."

*Fourthly.* If it be dangerous to engage too much of our time in the business of this world, then certainly *we must limit our daily intercourse with men, and reserve some time for religious solitude.* To be always among men, to move daily along in the bustle of society, spending every evening in the company of others, cannot but be very unprofitable for our spiritual life. Not only that we lose too much valuable time in this manner; that we live too little for ourselves and God; but it draws our heart away from God; we pass our days in a state of confusion, without time for reflection, like the men whose brains are overheated by the excessive use of ardent spirits.

Let us, on the contrary, often seek *religious soli-*

*tude*, that solitude which is carefully selected, for a limited season, in which we breathe freely after the toils and labors of the day, where the voice of society for a while remains silent;—that solitude in the open field or in our "upper room," where our thoughts are engaged in meditation, in reading, or prayer. That solitude in which we behold an Isaac, Jacob, David, and Daniel—in which we often followed our blessed Saviour, who here again has left us an example, *that we should follow Him.* O, may we learn to sing *with grace in our hearts to the Lord*,

"*I love* in solitude to shed
The penitential tear,
And all His promises to plead,
Where none but God can hear.

"*I love* to think on mercies past
And future good implore,
And all my cares and sorrows cast
On Him whom I adore.

"*I love* by faith to take a view
Of brighter scenes in heaven,
The prospect does my strength renew
While here by tempests driven."

But *fifthly.* If we have felt the necessity of *limiting* our intercourse, then we will easily perceive that *we have to guard against bad company.* Solomon says: "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. Prov. xiii. 20; and Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 33, *Evil communications corrupt good manners.* Compare Ps. i. 1. It is superfluous to show here the soul destroying

influence of all licentious and wicked company; but there is much society, genteel society as the world calls it, wherein not a word is spoken about God and his service or any elevating or instructive topic, but time is murdered with the least interesting talk, with vain babblings and unhappy wit, offensive to virtue and religion; society, wherein calumny and evil speaking or extravagance and pompous display bear the sceptre; all such company is *bad* company; for the fruits which we reap from it are these, that it may efface all good impressions, inspire us with wrong and erroneous ideas and prejudices, entice us to follow bad examples, bewilder our heads, and destroy our taste for all kinds of spiritual exercises. Ii is hardly necessary to add that it is most dangerous to seek the friendship of persons of bad morals and principles, particularly if they (and this is often the case) have the peculiar passion of defending and recommending their own manner of thinking and conduct. Without being aware of it, we imbibe something of their sentiments, and become their followers before we know it.

*Sixthly. The Christian must carefully renounce all sinful pleasures of the world.* I say *sinful* pleasures. For there are pleasures of this world which are not sinful, but proper recreations, and in accordance with the object of God; as there are: the reception and visiting of friends, family dinner parties, a walk or a ride, travelling for amusement, the contemplation of nature, music, singing, painting, and drawing, the chess board, or any like game of

skill, &c. But there are also pleasures of another class, as, the frequenting of coffee-houses, billiard rooms, the theatre, at least as it is at the present, balls, card-parties, and particularly all hazard-games, which are only invented to gain another's money. These and all such amusements, the Christian, who in earnest desires to serve God, must boldly renounce.

These amusements, almost without exception, either steal our time or our money; often both, and not seldom destroy the prosperity of a family; they are below the character, dignity, and earnestness of the Christian; and lastly, they injure our good impressions; pull down what religion has built up; make us averse to all earnest occupation; inspire us with erroneous conceptions; animate sinful passions; feed the depravity of the heart, and render our warfare but the more difficult. Are you in doubt as to whether some amusement is *sinful* or *not*, *harmless* or *not?* are you brought into a state of indecision by the resons of some one who preaches an easier morality, who defends the card-table, the theatre, balls, and such like? then follow the rule which the Apostle Paul gave, in a different case, to the Christians at Rome: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Rom. xiv. 5. To enjoy any amusement we must be *fully persuaded* by our own conscience, that it is not in contradiction to the will of God. We must not content ourselves with finding some plausible reasons to defend it. And therefore it is necessary to investigate it earnestly and closely, to observe

with impartiality the advice of conscience and to adhere to that.

Do you ask me perhaps: How can we be assured of the lawfulness of any amusement? I answer: propose to yourself the following questions; and *first.* Will, during this amusement, the thought of God's omniscience and presence trouble me, or not? *Secondly.* If Jesus Christ were still living here on earth, how would I feel if He should meet me in this or that amusement? *Thirdly.* Can I calmly pray before and after this enjoyment? *Fourthly.* How would I judge the enjoyment of such an amusement in other persons, for instance, in ministers of the gospel, if they participated in it? *Lastly.* How will I think about this pleasure on my death-bed, and when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Make those inquiries with sincerity; and if there remains still some doubting, consider it in that case safer to renounce too much than too little. All that we do *without faith*, without believing that it is either lawfully permitted, or duty, *is sin.* It was a Heathen maxim: *do nothing, in which you doubt.* And why should we? God gives us so many innocent pleasures in the world, which we can enjoy with all safety, that it is quite unnecessary to eat from the forbidden tree.

To this I must, *seventhly*, add another occasion for sin, which stands in close connection with the foregoing, and which the Christian ought to avoid; namely, *an over great conformity to this world.* I mean conformity to the man of the world, in following *the*

*fashion* in dress, ornaments, dwelling, and so on. We cannot say to a Christian: *Do not follow at all the custom of the world.* This would be foolish. There are certain general, indifferent, adopted customs, by disregarding which, we would bring ridicule upon ourselves and religion. But of the more interest is, therefore, the advice: *Do not adhere too much to the faults of the world.* Let your dwelling, your dress, your ornaments, your amusements, your manner of receiving company, be proportioned to your means, and to the position in society which God has given you; but do not seek your pattern among the proudest, the most elegant of your class; but among the most pious, humble, and liberal. By leaving this certain guide, we fall easily from error to error, and run the risk of becoming proud and over-attached to the things of this world. He who yields too much to the indifferent customs of the world, is on the road to follow also, its vices and sinful pleasures. Many pious Christians, by listening to the imperative voice of *fashion*, have lost their former excellence, as patterns of piety; when their days passed by with more calmness, but not less innocent enjoyment.

*Eighthly. A Christian should be on his guard against all disputes and troubles.* Their influence on mind and soul is most deplorable. We observe this not only in families where harmony and peace are often wanted, but also in those quarrelsome characters who generally have some matter of dispute on hand with their neighbors. We observe this in persons whose love to their country is debased to a

blind party strife, for which they neglect in moments of over-heated enthusiasm, all other interests, and which absorbs their thoughts to such a degree, that their interest in religion, and their citizenship in Heaven, become secondary things.

*Lastly, we must shun, as far as possible, all occasions which may tempt us to those sins to which we feel most inclined.* We bear in our soul, manifold seeds of evil, which only wait an opportunity for their development and growth. These opportunities we call occasions for sin. As there is a difference in temper and inclinations, so the same occasion for sin may be dangerous to one, harmless to another. To protect ourselves, therefore, we have to search our heart and find out our weakest points, and avoid carefully such occasions, persons, places, and moments, as we know the most dangerous for the well-being of our soul.

### Section XXXIV.

5th Precept.—Far from trusting in ourselves, we must look to God in Christ, for help and strength against temptations.

This advice is repeatedly given in the Holy Scriptures. Our Saviour has particularly commanded us to pray: "Our Father in Heaven, lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil." And in Gethsemane, he exhorted his disciples: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Matt. xxvi. 41. Herein the apostles have followed their Lord. Peter wrote to the dispersed Christians: "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Peter,

iv. 7. And Paul, after having described the whole armor of God, adds, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Compare Eph. vi. 10; Phil. iv. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Truly, it is necessary, highly necessary, to gird ourselves with the weapons which God has provided; but in order to use these successfully, we must use them under a deep sensibility of our dependence upon God, and humbly looking up to HIM.

In ourselves there is no strength against the power which rushes against us. Our eye must be fixed on God. Our safety must be with God in Christ Jesus.

If we look into our own bosom, we must discover but depravity, which conspires against us with the temptations from without. How feeble are we in our defence! Rather, how do we often love and seek the temptation, and listen to its flattering voice! We must be strangers to ourselves, if we cannot sing with our heart,

"Satan and sin unite their art,
To keep me from my Lord;
Dear Saviour, guard my trembling heart
And guide me by thy word.

My guardian, my almighty friend,
On thee my soul would rest;
On thee alone my hopes depend;
Be near, and I am blest."

For we may obtain strength and help against temptation, by prayer. Expiring on the cross, Jesus

obtained that Spirit which is able to destroy the vanquishing power of the greatest temptation. God is mighty to preserve and to sustain us. His grace, necessary in the least, is sufficient in the severest conflict. And is the Lord able, He is also willing to protect us. Or would we have been commanded to pray to Him for strength and help, if He were unwilling to grant it? Would the Father of Mercy, before whose throne our compassionate High Priest stands, refuse help to his needy child, that seeks for refuge against the temptations of sin?

Let us live, then, under deep impressions of our weakness and entire dependence, but also firmly believing that with God there is sufficient strength for us to withstand the most trying temptation. "Lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil," should be our prayer, whenever they menace or renew their attack. "Lead us not into temptations, but deliver us from evil," our prayer on the morning of every day which we enter, and which has other temptations for us in store.

### Section XXXV.

6th Precept.—Let your prayer be accompanied by all-comprising watchfulness.

A general, who is careless in observing the different movements of the army under his command, may, by his imprudence, soon bring it into a position which secures the greatest advantages to the enemy. And if those that are on guard are sleeping, the army may be furnished in a most complete manner for the

battle, and still be exposed to be overthrown by the enemy, without having an opportunity to use their arms in proper defence. Nothing can prove more dangerous than inattention in regard to their own movements, or to the designs of the enemy.

Such is the position of the Christian. He may be furnished with many weapons for his spiritual warfare; he may be filled with zeal and courage; but if he sleeps at a time when he ought to wake, *i. e.*, if he be careless and inattentive in regard to himself, and to the enemies of his faith and virtue, at the very time when he ought to be watchful about all that is going on within and around him, his whole armor will be of no avail; he will be surprised and vanquished before he has time to think about the means of defence.

It is therefore that the Gospel prescribes this rule to all who desire to withstand every occasion for sin. *Let your prayer be accompanied by all-comprising watchfulness.* "What I say unto you," were the Saviour's words, "I say unto all, Watch." Mark xiii. 37. A similar counsel He gives, Matt. xxvi. 41; Luke xii. 37. The Apostle Paul exhorts, 1 Cor. xvi. 13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith." The same he does, Eph. vi. 18, and 1 Pet. iv. 7.

The first part of this watchfulness regards *ourselves and our own actions.* The watchful man takes attentive care not to do anything to aid the enemies of his faith and virtue. In regard to his actions, "he ponders the path of his feet, he looketh well to the way of his going." Prov. iv. 16; xiv. 15. He

commences nothing thoughtless and wild, but ponders and reflects whether what he is going to do be lawful and profitable, or forbidden, and sinful, and unprofitable in its consequences. In the last case he carefully avoids engaging in anything by which he would expose himself to his enemies. The same attention he pays to his words. He endeavors, with the maker of the 39th Psalm, "to take heed to his ways, that he may not sin with his tongue;" and it is his prayer to God, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips." Ps. cxli. His senses he keeps in subjection, and instead of seeking the seductive, *he makes a covenant with his eyes* not to behold what is forbidden. Instead of listening to vulgar, unchaste, defaming, and slanderous language, *he stoppeth his ears* from hearing evil." Isa. xxxiii. 15. Above all, he watches the inward actions of his soul, "keeps the heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Prov. iv. 23. He watches all evil thoughts, wrong opinions, sinful imaginations and desires, inordinate passions, and unlawful intentions, which may originate in his heart, in order to withstand and destroy them in the beginning. He also watches those *minor* occasions for sin, of which we have spoken before; those faint and dark impressions and secret opinions, which often dwell unobserved in the soul; those faint and feeble wishes which provoke the stronger passions; and the present state of his heart, so as to know against what he ought to be *most on his guard at present.* He observes whether he is perhaps too easy in admitting

smaller sins, or repeating them frequently; whether he is sufficiently attentive in regard to indifferent and lawful things which may easily lead to sin. His watchfulness is an all-comprising watchfulness.

The *second part* of this watchfulness regards *things without*, that no attack of his spiritual enemies may take him by surprise. The watchful man is attentive to all the temptations, great or small, by which he is every where surrounded. He knows his enemies. He knows their power and indefatigable activity. He opens his eyes to the snares which they prepare in his road. He is apprehensive of some ambuscade, and has the weapons ready to defend himself at the first attack. Thus his watchfulness extends to manifold things of apparently little consequence. For instance, he is not only watchful in bad company, but also with the good; not only in the most fascinating temptations, or most forcible inducements of worldly gain, but also in those circumstances of less consequence, which are so apt to draw him away from God and the Saviour.

### Section XXXVI.

7th Precept.—Use your weapons against the temptations to sin, even the smallest, with courage.

It is not sufficient for the warrior to be well equipped, and exercised in the use of his weapons; he is brought at last into a case where he actually has to use them. The battle cannot always be evaded, it sometimes must be fought. Even so with the Christian. Notwithstanding his watchfulness, he often for-

gets himself and marches over the enemy's ground, from which he cannot withdraw without fighting; notwithstanding he avoids many dangers, into which others unconsciously run, he cannot escape every occasion and temptation to sin in this world.

The Gospel recommends us therefore to *strive with courage*. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," says the Saviour. Luke xiii. 24; and Matt. xxiv. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." The Apostle Paul advised his son Timothy to *fight the good fight of faith*; and, as he gave them himself as an example, so he wrote to the Corinthians: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." See 2 Tim. iv. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; xv. 58; Rev. iii. 21.

To *war* or *fight*, in the common meaning, expresses not only the act of defending, but also of attacking in order to fatigue, conquer, and subdue an enemy.

In a spiritual sense it therefore signifies, to resist temptations with force, to endeavor to render them powerless, so that they may not ensnare us, but on the contrary be conquered by us; and that we may be enabled, notwithstanding their opposition, to march on in the road of faith and godliness. The Christian soldier fights by striving against wrong opinions; by bridling evil intentions and passions; by refusing a listening ear to flattery; by remaining steadfast for the good cause under menaces or oppression; in one word, he standeth for the best cause, notwithstanding all the means to draw him away from it; so that,

having fought the good fight, he may obtain the crown of victory.

*And how must we resist the attacks of temptations?* Let one answer: *Fight with the weapons you have put on.* In Section xxxii. we make it a precept: *Be ready, by providing yourself in time with weapons.* Now, at the moment of attack from the side of the enemy, it becomes necessary *to use them.*

Fight then with *the truth* with which you girded yourself. Answer the doubts which spring up in your heart, with the grounds of the truth which you have learned to know.

Call to your assistance, against the sinful thoughts and imaginations which rise in your heart, that treasure of good sentiments which have become familiar to you. Are you on the point of yielding to the temptation, try then to quicken in you the remembrance of God's omniscience, of His perfections, of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, of His infinite love, of the vanity of all worldly enjoyment, of death, judgment and eternity. Fight with the *breastplate of righteousness.* Endeavor to weaken and to disappoint the temptations, by the constant exercise of virtue and godliness, and in diligently using the means of grace which God has provided, and which give solidity and strength to true piety. Let thus the new life which the Holy Spirit has wrought in you be confirmed, and crucify through the Spirit the workings of the flesh. Have you shod your feet with that *readiness for the warfare*, to which the Gospel must constrain you, encourage that readiness the

moment you are called to the battle, and renew then the determination, as a good soldier, to be willing to give all to the good cause you defend, and to stand the most fiery trial.

Have you exercised yourself already in trusting in God and the Saviour; have you thus taken already the *shield of faith;* then *use* in the hour of battle that *shield*, to defend you against the darts of temptation. Fix, during the contest, your eye on God and Jesus Christ. Animate your confidence that the Lord is on your side, and that He will keep His promise of assistance and help. The *helmet of salvation* will be also of service in this hour. Have you learned to rejoice in hope, so sustain that hope in the critical moment. Think what you would lose by leaving the ground to the enemy. Behold that crown of life which is kept for the victorious warrior; and let that hope give you sufficient strength to push forward through the ranks of your opponents. Are you girded with the *sword of the Spirit*, the *Word of God;* have you made yourself familiar with the pointed proverbs, lessons, exhortations, warnings, and promises, which are able to destroy the power of temptation; endeavor, then, to remember, and to avail yourself of such expressions and declarations, as suit your present circumstances, to answer the flattering voice, as well as the menacing words of sin, and thus defeat with the Divine Word the most fierce attacks against your faith and virtue. Lastly, *live constantly under a humble feeling of your dependence on God in Jesus Christ;* let it be your daily prayer: "Father in

heaven, lead us not into temptations"—let it be particularly your prayer in the hour of trial. Act like the little child, that in the moment of danger flies to his father, as his surest refuge. Let now your silent supplication ascend to God, to be preserved against the conquering power of temptation. Use *thus* your weapons, *praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the spirit.* In order to be successful in our warfare, we must observe *two* things. *Firstly, That we must not neglect to strive against the* SMALLEST *temptations, the* FIRST *causes of sin.* Are temptations slight, they are easily overcome. Do we neglect them, they soon grow powerful. The first causes of sin may be compared to combustible materials which have just taken fire; in the first moment they are easily extinguished, but give them some time only, and it is out of our reach to master the flames before they have occasioned considerable loss and destruction. Strive, therefore, against the *first causes;* combat sin in its infancy. The lesson is important when temptations assail you under the appearance of indifference, of being almost *no* temptation; be then on your guard, and rout them at once. When sinful thoughts, imaginations, and passions try to enter into your soul, drive them away at the very moment, by fixing your attention on something better; think then of God, of your Saviour, of your duty, of death and eternity, and lift up your hands to Him who is mighty and willing to assist you against your greatest foes.

*Secondly:* Strive *with courage;* that is, do not accede to the fear which the difficulties of the contest

inspire; but which we must check and moderate by remembering all the encouraging circumstances under which we labor. We may stumble, but this is no ground to abandon the hope of victory; for striving, constantly striving, striving *with courage*, the victory *will be* ours.

This courage is often recommended in the Word of God; as, for instance, Eph. vi. 10; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; xv. 18. According to these and other places of Scripture, the Christians are addressed in the same manner as Moses, by command of Jehovah, addressed Israel and Joshua: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, and be not afraid of them." Deut. xxxi. 6.

We need this courage, for great and many are the obstacles, difficulties, and temptations in the way of godliness! How necessary this courage! Courage gives strength.

"If thou faint in the day of adversity thy strength is small. Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thee." Proverbs xxiv. 10; Psalms xxvii. 14. But look at the encouraging circumstances and promises which accompany your warfare. Listen to the declarations of the gospel. The Lord will be with us—He who is with us is more than those against us—God has helped often in the decisive hour—The contest is rewarded by the rest which the victory gives—The difficulties of the contest are the greatest in the beginning—The enemies of our faith and virtue are already conquered by Christ. We have the examples of many before us who distinguished themselves in the battle; remember a Paul,

a Moses, the cloud of witnesses mentioned in Hebrews xi., and above all, the Lord Jesus Christ, "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

*Lastly.* Christians, the contest is difficult, but glorious also the prize which is kept for you at the end of your course. O glorious crown of immortality! kept for all who have fought the good fight. Blessed rest, after so much fatigue—endless joy, after many sorrows and tears—eternal amends for temporal sacrifices—encouraging prospect to march on with renewed zeal, unshaken by the greatest difficulties in the paths of faith and godliness!

"O let my soul march boldly on,
Press forward to the heavenly gate;
There peace and joy eternal reign,
And glittering robes for conquerors wait.

"There shall I wear a starry crown,
And triumph in almighty grace;
While all the armies of the skies
Join in my glorious Leader's praise."

PART FOURTH.—RULES TO ASSIST US IN USING THE MEANS FOR OUR CHRISTIAN GROWTH, AND THE WEAPONS AGAINST THE CAUSES AND OCCASIONS OF SIN.

## SECTION XXXVII.

Of the habit of well doing, through constant use of the means and repeated practice.

The first rule is this: *Try to obtain a habit of well doing by constant use of those means which we*

*contemplate in the second part of this chapter, and by repeated practice.*

It becomes a habit to us if we perform something, not only now and then, but regularly, and from a rooted principle. The physician of Semnon has prescribed him to take daily a walk. As he was never accustomed to this, it gave him in the beginning some trouble to follow the physician's advice. Every time he had to remember the wise reasons his doctor had given him with the precept. But persuaded by these reasons he commenced. And now he has gone on for some time, and he is habituated to his walk. That is, he walks daily with pleasure, and *as if he always had done so.* This example, I hope, will explain what I understand by habit in doing well. This *habit* includes, therefore, constancy, uniformity, willingness, facility, aptness, readiness. This habit of well doing must not be taken for a kind of mechanical religion or virtue, which are of little value. No, this habit must be founded on important motives or reasons, which by representing them repeatedly to ourselves, will become so familiar to us, that at last they direct our conduct almost as from instinct.

This habit in well doing, which may be taken as a high degree in our Christian growth, is obtained *partly* by the constant use of the means which we have contemplated in the second part of this chapter, and partly by repeatedly exercising ourselves in doing good. In regard to the first I have nothing to add on this occasion; but as to that *exercise* I will make a few remarks. We learn by practice. By

thousand times repeated endeavors the child learns to stand and to walk. So it is with the art of writing, drawing, music, with all exercises of body and mind. The same it is in the *moral* world. The Holy Spirit renews us through the gospel. We obtain thereby light, desire, and strength for good works. But the faculty, the *habit*, we obtain by repeated practice. Seek, for instance, to be grateful and submissive—represent to yourselves and become entirely familiar with the reasons which must constrain you to gratitude and submission to God, and those Christian graces will more and more abound in you. You will show your love to your fellow-men by acts of benevolence, by giving them instruction, by consoling those that mourn, by visiting the widow and the fatherless. Be constantly, regularly engaged in these praiseworthy actions, and they will become a habit with you. The manner of our progressing in virtue, is the same which we observe in nature. No fruit is produced by irregular, violent shocks, but grows and ripens by slow, steady, advancing development and continued labor.

### Section XXXVIII.

#### Of time and Order.

It necessarily requires time to use the means of grace in the constant manner I recommended. And where do we find that time? Where does the man find it who toils and labors from morning until evening, or the mother of a family who is all the day engaged in cares for her children and household?

Let me answer the question by giving this *second rule: Buy the time and let there be order in all what you do.*

We *buy the time* by taking care not to lose it in an unprofitable manner, but on the contrary to gain some by sacrificing much of our ease and comfort. How we do this best I will endeavor to show in a few particulars.

*Firstly. By rising early.* The whole day will be spoiled by rising *one* hour too late; for it brings us *too late* for our business and every thing else; and we may be sure either to neglect entirely our private and social worship, or attend to it in a hurried manner. Rise on the contrary one hour earlier than usual, and you will be astonished that you can give to every thing its due time and have always time to spare.

*Secondly.* Curtail the time set apart for meals, dressing, and all customs of society which we cannot entirely forsake; but to which many are sacrificing a great part of their day.

The same regards, *thirdly*, our visiting, tea-parties, and other amusements. Do not follow the example of people who make it their study how to murder the valuable time, and who would consider themselves unhappy without their game at billiards, or cards, their 'Change or theatre, to spend their slowly running hours. Be on your guard against such a loss of time, and only give so much to social intercourse or amusement as will serve to recruit for a more useful employ of those hours, always remembering the object for which you live.

*Fourthly.* Every thing that your hand findeth to do, do with zeal, with despatch; not slowly, with the action of a man who would rather be excused; but with that constant activity, that perseverance, that ambition, which is created by the glowing desire to achieve much. In this manner the work proceeds. And in order to have that zeal, to promote our success, you will find a most valuable assistant in commencing your labors with prayer to God. The experience of all pious men will bear witness to the fact, that in general all days which they commenced with prayer and thanksgiving, were the happiest, and in some respect blessed by Him who ruleth over all.

*Fifthly.* Let me recommend you to profit by those *between-moments*, which are so often lost. I allude to those moments between work and recreation. Your dinner is not quite ready; you are waiting for some friend, and so on. Most people do not know what to do with themselves in these intervals, and often regard their clock; the ever-active men spends those moments in reading a newspaper or magazine, or some reading matter by which he may gain for his mind or soul.

*Lastly. We buy the time* by *order* in all we do. Not order alone in our domestic affairs, but order also in a right division of our time. We gain inconceivably by representing to ourselves every morning all that we wish to accomplish during the day; by dividing the day in convenient parts for the different duties we have to perform; by choosing the right time for each; and, above all, doing with promptness

what has to be done, never postponing until to-morrow what may be done to-day. He who labors in this manner, with order, experiences that "there are sixty minutes in an hour," although they seem to fly; whereas, other people who are more careless in regard to time, spend half of it in plan-making and deliberations.

### Section XXXIX.

The solemn consecration of ourselves to God and His service.

To promote our earnest zeal in all we have said, it will be found profitable to observe this *third rule: Consecrate yourselves at times and in a solemn manner to God and his service.* That we have to choose God and His service in all sincerity and with *all* our heart we have endeavored to show before; but here we intend *a more solemn dedication and engagement of ourselves towards God.* Wherein does this consist? How have we to do this? And why should we do this? Three questions, which we are going to answer.

*Wherein does it consist?* Herein, that we are not only determined in our heart to serve God, but that we declare this before Him in so emphatic a manner, which will engrave it on our memory. The most simple manner of doing this is in a solemn address to God. In silent solitude we bow our knees before Him "who understandeth our thoughts afar off;" we seek to impress ourselves deeply with a sense of the Divine presence, we confess before Him the inner sentiments of our heart: "O my God, in this mo-

ment I declare solemnly unto Thee, that I regard myself such a sinner as Thy word describes me to be; that I feel no objections against, but accept with all my heart, the way in which Thou wilt save me; and that I freely render myself unto Thee thus to be saved. In this moment, I also solemnly engage, to renounce all service of the world and of sin, to serve only Thee, and to submit myself entirely to Thy holy will. To Thee I consecrate all the powers of my body and soul, desirous to be satisfied with the ways of Thy Providence." More impressive will this exercise prove to be, if we make such a declaration for ourselves *in writing;* declaring that, after earnest meditation, at such a time, at such a place, and under such circumstances, we solemnly engage ourselves, without any regard to others, *to serve the Lord;* and doing this with that calmness and earnestness before God, by which we in truth confess: *I am the Lord's.*

Those who are not baptized in their infancy, will find a proper time for this consecration of themselves to God, in the day of their Baptism; others when they become members of the Church. The day we celebrate the Lord's Supper, will be a well adapted season for every Christian to renew these holy vows.

But *how have we to do this?* This consecration must be, 1. *Wholly* complete, so that we engage ourselves in the *entire* service of God. 2. *Sincere*, with all our heart; 3. *Soberly-minded*, not in a moment of enthusiasm, but after earnest reflection; 4. *Dependently*, from a humble sense of our depravity, and relying on the help of God; 5. *Courageously*, so

that, strong in the Lord, no obstacles will intimidate us.

And *why should we do this?* This was the last question. Because it will serve us to know our own sincerity; but also render us more scrupulous in regard to sin, more obedient towards God. We will not permit ourselves so easily, little liberties, but it will render us more uniform in our conduct. Such a solemn engagement will prove to us in advanced years a cord, which restrains us from going astray, and which will lead us back to our Heavenly Father.

When the flame of our love and piety dies away, when the hour of temptation approaches, when we become easier about existing evils around us, when we are brought at the point to give ourselves to sins which are inconsistent with our Christian character, and we remember in that hour: "On *that* day, at *that* place, under *such* circumstances, after mature reflection, I solemnly consecrated myself to the Lord." Tell me, can it be otherwise, but that thought will affect our soul, and bring us on our knees with humble and earnest prayer, and make us renew, and keep our former vows?

An interesting example of such a solemn engagement to God, we find in the 24th Chapter of Joshua, where the pious Joshua *took a great stone, and set it up*, and said to the people: "Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord, which He spake unto us; it shall be, therefore, a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God!"

I earnestly engage you, my Christian friends, to read this whole chapter of Joshua, and with me you will think but the higher of the blessed influence of such a consecration to God, when you will read in the simple style of the historian, in the 31st verse: "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel."

### Section XL.

The daily remembrance of our solemn engagement towards God.

The rule we have just recommended will prove the more profitable, if we observe thereby this *fourth* one: *Commence every day with the remembrance of your solemn consecration to God, and inquire every evening in what manner you have complied with it.* The essential point is *to live* actually according to our engagement. And we will feel that this must be impossible, if we forget and neglect the remembrance of that engagement; and that on the contrary, the more we keep it constantly before our mind, the more it will exercise a powerful influence on our daily course of life. When you then awake in the morning, let it become your thought: "Whose am I? To whom do I belong? Did I not consecrate myself to God, to live to His glory, and to employ the powers of my soul and body in His service? So, then, I am bound to conduct myself accordingly. Assist me thereto, O God, with Thy Holy Spirit. I am Thine. O that my ways may

be directed this day to keep Thy statutes." Remember, in this manner, thy holy vows, and renew the same. And further ask yourselves: "What must duty expect from me this day? What occasions may I have to do good? Against what temptations must I prepare myself? What will be the best course to follow in the one case and in the other?" Such an exercise will leave impressions upon your soul which, in the course of the day, even under all the bustle of life, will not entirely disappear.

Not less profitable will you find it, at the close of the day, to look back at the past hours, and to examine in how far you have fulfilled your engagements towards God. Heathen philosophy has recommended this exercise, as Seneca in the example of Sixtius.

The Holy Scriptures counsel us to *know what we have done*, to *reflect upon our ways;* and is it not proper to do this at the evening of the day, which closes again one of the periods of our sojourn here below? In this way we get better acquainted ourselves with the good which we, by the grace of God, have performed; with the sins which we have committed anew, and with the depravity that dwells within us: the first to augment our joys and gratitude, the latter to humble ourselves before God, to appreciate the more His forgiving and healing grace in Jesus Christ, and to discover the object against which our warfare is the most required. The Christian might thus ask himself, before retiring to rest: "Have I shown, this day, that it was my earnest desire to be faithful to my solemn engagement before

God? What were my deeds, my words, my thoughts, my passions, my objects? How have I acted towards God, towards myself, and towards my fellow-men? How in my employ, in company, in solitude, in my family, in amusements, under blessings, sorrows, or troubles, in temptations, in occasions for well-doing? How did I conduct myself under the divers circumstances of this day? What were my feelings and object? These, or such questions, it will be well to consider; and the answer which we receive will plainly direct us how we have to close our day, and with what thoughts and resolutions for the future we may commend ourselves to the watching eye of our Heavenly Father.

### Section XLI.

Of self-examination, in regard to our spiritual state and growth as Christians.

In the foregoing section we have spoken of that self-examination at the close of every evening, which regards our actions during the past day. I now wish to speak of a self-examination in a wider sense, in regard to our spiritual state; that is, *whether we are Christians in truth, and if we grow as such.* This examination consists in a more constant observation of ourselves, even during the occupations of the day. I therefore propose as a *fifth and last rule: Examine yourselves, prove your ownselves with a more constant attention, in regard to your spiritual state and Christian growth.* In order to explain and recommend this rule, it may be well to pause at the four following

questions: 1. *As to what* must we examine ourselves? 2. *Wherein consists* this self-examination? 3. *How* have we to proceed in proving ourselves? and lastly, *Why* is this self-examination necessary?

*As to what must we examine ourselves?* This was the first question. We must examine how we stand in regard to Christianity; *first*, if we *are* true Christians? *secondly*, if we *progress* as Christians? To judge whether we are true Christians, or, as the Apostle Paul expresses himself, (2 Corinthians, xiii. 5,) *whether we are in the faith*, whether *Jesus Christ is in us*, it will be necessary to represent to ourselves plainly and distinctly the character of the true Christian according to God's holy word. The Bible alone is the standard which we have to consult; it is the only true one, on which we can safely rely; all other *proofs* of faith, which are the invention of men, and not founded on the Word of God, are of no value. The true Christian believes in Jesus Christ, and such is his faith that it exercises a powerful influence on his heart and conversation. I have shown this in the first chapter, first part, "*The True Christian.*" We may therefore know whether we are true Christians by our practice of all that belongs to that faith in Christ; and further, by its influence on our heart and conduct. We may compare ourselves with the sketch of *The True Christian*, which I have given, I trust, according to the Word of God.

But we have to examine ourselves also in regard to our *growth as Christians*. Wherein this growth exists I have explained in the second part, first chap-

ter—"*The Perfect Christian*"—and particularly from section seven to ten, by which it will be well to compare ourselves.

But, *secondly*, *wherein consists this self-examination?* Herein, that we observe ourselves attentively, in order to know what we may think of ourselves, our Christianity, and our progress as Christians. For this object it is necessary to search ourselves, to observe our ideas, convictions, ruling sentiments, desires, and continual mode of life. We compare these with the proofs of faith which the Bible declares as such, and we ask ourselves whether this practice of faith has become our own? if that faith has power on our heart and walk? if we feel an interest in Jesus? if we seek confidently help with Him? If we find in ourselves those results of penitence, love to God and Jesus, returning to God and His commandments, and striving against sin, which are the necessary consequences of faith?

Let us observe here, that it may be profitable to exercise this self-examination in the hour of solitude; but, in order to judge ourselves correctly, we have to extend our observation during all the transactions of daily life.

We must act in regard to ourselves as a wise tutor will act with his pupil. He will regard him from morning until eve in all his doings and circumstances. We must not postpone our observations until night, but watch ourselves with a closely observing eye during the hour of business, in our dealings and conversation with others, under the enjoyment of amuse-

ments, in all the circumstances of life. Thus we will best be able to know ourselves in regard to our religious condition. The more so if we,

*Thirdly, proceed properly in this way of proving ourselves* for (in answer to the third question) this self-examination must be made with *exactness*, *impartiality*, and *in the sight of God.*

With *exactness*, not superficial, but with a sharp and piercing eye. We must prove ourselves in certain particulars by which we may know our sincerity; for instance: Do I accept the Lord Jesus Christ as declared in the gospel, not only as teacher and example, but also as *the propitiation for our sins;* and not only as such, but also as teacher and example? Do I only recognize my sins, or do I also renounce them? Do I only strive against those sins which I can easily leave off, or also against the most cherished sins, which it would cost me the most to abandon? Do I seek an ostentatious piety for the world, or purity of heart before God and Jesus, in secret as well as in public? Does my seeking God in solitude harmonize with my words and conversation in the world?

*With impartiality.* Sincere and insincere Christians are both inclined to judge themselves with partiality. The latter in his favor, the first to the contrary. The insincere loves to think favorably of himself and believes soon that all is well; the sincere, on the contrary, often beholds his sins through a magnifying glass. He fears to deceive himself. In this manner he does not easily observe, or he doubts

the proof of a truly Christian state of heart, which he in fact possesses.

To judge ourselves correctly, we must avoid the two extremes. We must act conscientiously without being too severe or too lenient. It is, therefore, necessary to prove ourselves under vivid impressions that we are *in the sight of God;* that He sees us and knows our heart; and under earnest prayer for His enlightening Spirit.

And thus we have come to the *fourth* question: *Why is this self-examination necessary?* It is not only necessary, but profitable. Or is it not wise and prudent for the merchant to look over his books in order to know the state of his affairs? And is it not of much more importance for every one of us to look into the state of our souls, in order that we should not deceive ourselves in affairs of *eternal* interest?

Whether we are Christians in truth or whether we are not, in both cases this self-examination will prove highly profitable. For, suppose a moment you were but a Christian in name, in your imagination; how proper then this self-examination to make the valuable discovery, and to bring you into the path that leadeth to Heaven. Were you living on without an attentive watch upon yourself, you might proceed in the erroneous supposition that you are a Christian, without being it in truth. You might flatter yourself with Heaven, and still run the risk of discovering *too late*, that you had deceived yourself. A faithful self-examination will yet disclose in time the self-deceit, and engage you to seek in reality what you

now possess in your imagination only. Suppose, on the other hand, that your heart is sincere before God; that you are a true Christian indeed, possessing and giving proofs of your faith; then self-examination will not only show you what more is needed, but it will also show you your faith, your Christian sentiments and conversation; and make it *known* unto you, *how Jesus Christ is in you;* and this knowledge will prove to you the richest source of consolation, a constraining motive to gratitude and godliness!

END OF VOL. I.

# VOLUME II.

## THE MALADIES OF MEN IN REGARD TO RELIGION, IN THEIR NATURE, CAUSES, AND REMEDIES.

### Section I.

### Introduction.

In the first volume of this *Doctrine of Practice*, we contemplated the *means* which God has provided for the true practice of religion. In the present volume we will present the *remedies* against the different *maladies*, in regard to that practice.

Wherever the gospel of Christ is preached, that gospel is not necessarily well known, believed, or brought into practice by all who hear, or could hear it. Manifold, alas! are the maladies of the human mind and heart, which are in conflict with the true practice of religion, and are so many obstacles to live holy and peaceably as true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Let us therefore move among men; let us observe their different opinions and character in view of religion; let us look into our own hearts; let us

inspect the biographies of some men in the Bible; and the want of true religion will present itself to our view under different colors and from all sides.

We will not only contemplate these moral or spiritual maladies in regard to the true practice of Christianity in their nature, but show, in the meantime, their courses and remedies, as well as the necessity of getting cured of them.

For the sake of order, I will divide this volume into five principal parts, or chapters. The first chapter will treat of persons *who walk in the paths of sin without reflection;* the second, *of men who use some consideration, but for different causes walk in the same road—or at least, are hindered from entering in the way to life.* In the third chapter, we will speak of men *who seek after God in Jesus Christ, but who still are hindered, from different motives, from obtaining that peace and power which the gospel may afford.* In the fourth, of such *maladies in believers as separate them from that degree of holiness which is attainable in this world;* to conclude, in the fifth chapter, *with some lessons and counsels to move advanced and confirmed Christians.*

# CHAPTER I.

OF THE MALADIES OF MEN WHO WALK IN THE PATHS OF SIN WITHOUT REFLECTION.

## Section II.

### Ignorance.

The first malady which meets our eyes is *Ignorance*, by which we here understand, "that entire want of knowledge of Christianity by which we hardly know, or know not at all, what it means." Alas! how general is this ignorance even among Christians. How many do we find in the country and in the city, who, as blind as the heathen, live on, day after day, and year after year, without a thought or an idea about God and His service. How many do we meet in the country who labor in their fields, despise instruction, who attend perhaps public worship with a sleeping heart and sleeping eyes, and live and die without any true knowledge of that Gospel which is preached unto them. How many do we meet in our great cities who pay little attention to any kind of instruction, but least of all, religious, and whose thoughts are entirely taken up with their business and the cares of life—even among those who are so-called members of the Church.

Whence so much ignorance, and this under the light of the Gospel? As a *first* cause, I may name *carelessness about religious instruction* in the educa-

tion of youth. Among the lower classes in town and country, we see many parents who have not the least regard for their children, as far as religion is concerned, and allow them to grow up as if they were born in a Heathen country. And among the more respectable classes of society, the religious education of youth is often entirely limited to their attending the Sunday School.

A *second* cause may be found in *the mode of life which many follow.* Here we behold people who toil and labor from morning until eve, without having a moment to spare to recall their thoughts unto God, to read His Holy Word, or to spend some short time in private devotion. There we see others with the foolish idea, that they may promote their welfare by boldly and ungratefully misusing the Sabbath-day, which God has appointed as a day of rest and worship, and who proceed with the labor of every-day life. Or we meet with people who, the moment their labors are finished, run after their unprofitable amusements or pleasures, to which they are enslaved, and thus lose every moment that they might appropriate to gain some religious knowledge.

A *third* cause I would call *the want of interest for the moral instruction of the lower classes of society.* Do we visit them often enough? Do we encourage them to use the means of instruction which are free to them as to others? Do we try sufficiently to make their children the instruments of instructing the parents, by bringing them into our schools? Is sufficient provision made for them in our churches?

Are our sermons not often such learned discourses that they pass their understanding? Could we not open to them occasions to receive religious instruction more adapted to their age than the Sunday School? by which they might be taught in a simple, acceptable and interesting manner, without being obliged to commit much to memory, or to study a particular lesson?

But as a *fourth* and principal reason, I must name the *slothfulness for religious study.* One loves too much his ease to trouble himself with seeking for religious knowledge; another is too earthly-minded to withdraw his attention from worldly things, and to fix his ideas on the heavenly. A third is so slow of comprehension, that he soon loses his courage in the attempt; or is so averse to God and all serious things, that he cannot think of any thing more tiresome than the study of religion.

*How necessary, however, how highly necessary is it that we should be cured of this ignorance!* By ignorance we degrade ourselves to the position of the brute, instead of honoring our rank as thinking men! By ignorance, we not only deprive ourselves of all the moral enjoyments which are attached to the true knowledge of God and His service, but we make it ourselves impossible to believe and to practice the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to participate in the salvation which it offers to all. For how can we walk in the way of life without knowing it? How can it be possible to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to return to God, if we have no knowledge of God and

the Saviour, nor about our sinful state; if we do not know what we have to understand by faith and conversion? O, if these pages, in the ways of Divine Providence, should come under the eyes of one who thus far has remained ignorant of the glorious gospel, I would pray him, for the sake of his immortal soul, to take these things into earnest consideration; for not only does this voluntary ignorance render us most miserable, but it makes us, who live under the blessed light of the gospel, the more guilty before God by ungratefully and willfully rejecting the light which His lovingkindness has deigned to offer us. I would beseech him to pause one moment, render prayer to God, and contemplate the endless consequences of his ignorance. I would beseech him to go to the deathbeds of the willfully ignorant, and to observe there how terribly their conscience awakes; how they in that hour desire and thirst after knowledge in regard to the way of salvation; but, alas, how short is the time which now remains for that purpose; how utterly unfit are they in body and soul to obtain that knowledge. The minister of the gospel may try to impress them with the most simple truths; but to them it is as if he spoke in a foreign tongue—they do not understand him; they now bitterly regret the hours which have passed unprofitably by, and, not seldom, overwhelmed with fear and horror, and tortured with despair, they enter eternity!

And what are *the remedies against this evil?* Were I to answer this question to one who has reflected about his true position, and who acknowledges

his ignorance, and desires to be cured of it, I would say: Use the light which God, in preference to many millions of people, has given to you; attend regularly and diligently some Bible-class, or the Sunday School. Do not neglect public worship; read daily your Bible, or if you cannot read, let others read it for you. Acquire a taste for sound, plain and religious reading. Try to observe much, to meditate often, and to converse with others about Divine truth. Let there be order in your mode of life, your labors, recreations and conversation, so as to have some time left during the day, for the cultivation of your mind. Appropriate thereto by all means the Sabbath-day. Use these means with confidence in Him who has provided them, and who can bless them to your good. Prostrate yourself often before God, before Jesus Christ, that you may receive the eye of understanding through the Holy Spirit, so as to comprehend with influence on your soul, all which the gospel teaches, and that the slowness may be removed from you, which hindered you so much in all religious study. The most ignorant, if taught by the Lord, progress rapidly. Pray therefore often with the words of David: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." Psalm cxix. "Show me Thy ways, O Lord, teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth, and teach me; for Thou art the God of my salvation!" Psalm xxv.

But alas, there are many who have not that desire to be cured of their ignorance, who are satisfied with it, and live on without troubling their mind about the

subject. And now rises the question: what may be done for *them?* And in view of the causes I have just named, I answer, let parents feel their obligations to do more for the religious education of their children; let them "endeavor, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Let the minister of the gospel visit the humble dwelling of the laborer and the poor, and invite them to partake of the means for instruction, which are freely offered to them; let him remember this class of hearers in the composition of his sermons; but above all, let the friends of the Saviour, the members of His Church, assist their pastors in these labors, by Bible and tract distribution, by visiting and conversing with the humble in their midst; let them look to the growing generation, that never heard the name of Him who said, "Let the children come to me," who judgeth without distinction of person. (Read with attention the exhortation of the Apostle James, Chapter ii. 1–12.)

Use your influence and encourage all those in your employ, to acquire religious knowledge by attending the preaching of the gospel; by attending Sunday Schools; by good reading, &c.; and commend the unhappy ignorant in your social and private prayer, to the infinite mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

### Section III.

#### Indifference about truth and error.

Another evil we frequently meet with is the *indifference about truth and error*, "that indifference which considers it the same what we believe as long as we act well?" Melidor is one of those indifferent persons. He does not reject the Christian Religion, neither does he accept it. He does not mind any thing in regard to faith, and does not consider it necessary at all. "There are so many different opinions," says he, "among men! So many religions! Heathens, Jews, Turks, and Christians, all have theirs! And how many different sects among Christians; how many *ists* and *ans*, and every one of them thinks that they are in the right! Who is able to decide about so many different opinions? Must we not say, *What is truth?* It is therefore foolishness to meddle with all that kind of disputes. I will keep out of it. Why should I trouble myself so much about the truth? After all, what is necessary but *to live well.* If one is honest and virtuous and observes the rules of justice and equity, if he loves God and men, it makes no difference whether he calls himself a Catholic or Protestant, Jew or Heathen; whether he follows Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates or Christ; whether he respects the Koran of the Turks, or the Bible of the Christians. We expect to arrive all at the same place, perhaps by different roads."

Thus Melidor thinks, and hundreds think as he does. *It is all the same what we believe if we only*

*act well.* This is an opinion which receives much applause, and still no dogma is less true, more irrational than this. Let me show this by a few observations. Is it not an *imperfection* in man to form ideas about a thing which are contradictory with the nature of the case? if so, we may not be indifferent whether we are right or wrong. Does not natural religion already teach us to seek after a correct and consistent knowledge of God, and to observe and to believe in his witnesses? Does this not belong to the duties of religion, is this not necessary to "*live* and *act well?*" To neglect the knowledge of God, to be indifferent about it whether our knowledge about God is correct or erroneous, what else is it but transgressing the first duties of religion? Not to be willing to *believe* what God declares, is that less sinful than not to be willing to *do* what God commands? Not to listen where God speaks, not to trouble ourselves whether we believe His words or not; is this anything else than shameful despising of God? If it is immaterial what we believe, why then have Christ and His apostles not only preached their moral doctrine, but also the truths of religion? Why did they lay so much stress on faith? Why then was God *bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders?*

But, above all, it is necessary to observe that it is morally impossible *to live well*, and at the same time *be indifferent as to what we believe.* The convictions of the mind exercise a great influence on our hearts and conduct. The will follows the understanding. Is it true, that to live a pious and virtuous life we

need the help of the Holy Spirit? Is it of no importance what I think about this? On the contrary, my ideas upon this point will exercise a powerful influence upon my practice. For do I reject the necessity of this Divine assistance, I will rely upon my own strength, I will undertake the fulfilling of my duties, trusting in my own power, and repeated disappointment, perhaps the deepest fall, will soon be the deserved reward of my pride. Do I feel, on the contrary, my weakness, do I believe that I need the powerful assistance of the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish my duties in a correct manner, this belief will make me lowly-minded and dependent, it will encourage me in using all the possible means for my recovery, and to pray earnestly to God for the power of His Spirit. A mode of acting which always will prove successful.

But more than all this, *to live well*, without having some fixed ideas about faith, *religion*, separated from the doctrines of the Bible, is something entirely inconceivable. The moment we acknowledge some religious sentiments and deeds, we also acknowledge certain conceptions of the mind, certain convictions of truths and doctrines. For instance, it is religion to love God; but the moment my heart experiences that love, my mind must represent to itself some perfections in God which awake that love in my heart. It is religion to commend all our interests in prayer unto God, but is this religious act possible without believing in certain Bible-doctrines, as, that God is omniscient, to hear our prayer; almighty, so that He

*can* answer them; and infinitely gracious in being *willing* to answer? All acts, therefore, of true religion and virtue are inseparably united to the conviction of the mind of some Bible-truths or doctrines, and nothing sounds more absurd than to separate the *practice* of religious duties, from the *belief* in the doctrines of religion. This dogma of the indifferent is not only false and absurd, it is moreover dangerous. Being indifferent how they think themselves, denying the value of *truth*, they feel no anxiety to seek for the truth; but, on the contrary, they extinguish the flame of love for the truth in the hearts of their fellow-men. Thus they deprive others and themselves from believing in such Divine truths as constitute the true pillars of virtue and which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, are the only effectual means to fill our hearts with consolation, peace, joy, strength and fitness for endless happiness. And what will be the consequences of such a dogma in eternity! Terrible will be the experience of the soul that, indifferent about truth here on earth, discovers, too late, in eternity its mistake; discovers that to be a reality which it had considered a mere joke; that those same truths which it depreciated while in the world, are not only well founded, but of the most important interest, as will be experienced in the most dreadful consequences.

O you, that are indifferent about truth and error, pause, I beseech you, in view of the future, and let these thoughts convince you of the necessity of being healed of this malady of your immortal souls! Do you ask me for *remedies?* I will show them in look-

ing with you at the *causes.* What was the reason of your being thus far so indifferent about truth and error? The *desire of imitating others;* for, alas! we may call this indifference the fashion of the present century—then you ought to be covered with shame, and to remember that the truly wise is never blindly convinced by the prevalent opinions and false maxims of others, but only and alone by substantial proofs. Or perhaps your proclaimed indifference about the truth, was a *secret aversion to the truths of the Gospel;* and in that case, I call upon yourself to condemn an opinion which rests upon such a foundation.

But perhaps your indifference may originate in less impure sources. Perhaps *you have not considered thus far what it includes to "live well," nor the influence of the truth upon your conduct.* Perhaps you considered *truth* as an object of unfruitful speculation. Recollect then what we have said in the foregoing pages. Recollect it often, that to *live well* includes undoubtedly the knowledge of God, and faith in all He declares; and that our way of thinking, as the will follows the understanding, exercises an astonishing power over our conduct, and it therefore becomes very essential for our religion and virtue to foster sound ideas. Perhaps your indifference originates in *the goodly wish for the salvation of people of all kinds of religions.* In that case you must recollect that, noble and praiseworthy as such a desire is, it must never lead us to embrace dogmas which are false and opposed to the salvation of men. Do you feel truly an interest in the salvation of your fellow-

creatures, then lend your helping hand in the spread of the glorious and grace-proclaiming Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Preach the gospel to every creature!*

Perhaps your indifference originates in *the difference of opinion about some points in religion between learned men.* But this, instead of leading to *indifference*, should awake your desire to search for yourself, and weigh the grounds upon which the assertions of the different parties are based. There are also points of difference which have but little or no influence on our practice, our peace, and therefore, on our salvation. Such differences of opinion will not prevent true faith and piety. In regard to these, we may say: "It is immaterial how we have thought about this point, if we only respect the principal doctrine of the Gospel, believe in it with all our heart, and thereby are constrained to live in godliness after the lessons and example of the Lord Jesus Christ." Unreasonable would be the conclusion, that because we may be indifferent about some small matters of dispute regarding religion, we may be indifferent about the most important truths of the Holy Gospel.

Perhaps your indifference arises from *dissatisfaction with some people who distinguish themselves in zeal for orthodoxy, who would sacrifice their lives for the true doctrine of religion, and at the same time disregard virtue and piety.* That dissatisfaction is well placed; but if this dissatisfaction should lead you to indifference, you would, by avoiding one evil, run into another. Faith, without virtue, means no-

thing. Virtue, without faith, is alike worthless, and even inconceivable. But faith, that purifieth the heart, faith, fruitful in good works, is the true and only safe road in which we have to walk. In conclusion, let me add this advice: Pray God to open your eyes for the proper knowledge of your own self, and of the miserable state in which you are brought by sin. He who has correct views of his position, remains not longer indifferent as to how he must think and what he has to believe, but he longs to hear and to embrace the truths of the gospel, which may give peace to his soul, and the well-founded hope of forgiveness and grace.

### Section IV.

Knowledge and orthodoxy, without heartfelt faith, without piety and virtue.

The opposite of ignorance and indifference about the truth, we see, in the outward professor of religion, the man of pure knowledge, but without purity in his intentions and walk. He accepts the gospel doctrine with his mind, and professes openly that he believes it to be the only true one, but it does not interest him for himself, he neither feels nor acts according to that gospel. He believes to be *perfectly true* all the gospel declares in regard to the miserable state of mankind, on account of sin; of the salvation by Christ; of the means to participate in that salvation, and of the manner in which we must show our gratitude for God's infinite lovingkindness. This he believes to be true—this he professes. O, he is

willing to defend these truths at any time. But, alas! in regard to his heart and acts, it is the same as if he did not believe at all. He does not trouble himself about these truths. He acts in contradiction to them. His own sins do not lead him to humiliation and penitence. For himself he feels no interest in the salvation through Jesus Christ. He does not know what it is to make Christ "his hiding-place," to trust in Him, nor the disposition of the heart to live after His commandments. Men of this character have "a name that they live, but are dead." They say, "I know Him, and keep not His commandments;" they "profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." See Rev. iii. 1; 1 John ii. 4; Tit. i. 16.

It not seldom happens that such persons are learned; that they know perfectly well to speak about doctrines and duties, and to present the means for our Christian reformation with great accuracy, without thinking, for a moment, of acting for themselves accordingly.

And herein we behold another malady of which it is highly necessary to be cured. It is no doubt a great privilege, which we never can overvalue, if we have been brought up from our childhood in the true religion of the gospel. Often we may witness that early and pure impressions of religion, sooner or later, exercise a blessed influence on the soul. But still it cannot be repeated too often, that knowledge and outward profession, without sincere faith and sanctification, are entirely insufficient to save us.—

For, *firstly*, the Bible speaks in the plainest terms

of the insufficiency of a faith which only dwells in the mind, without influence on our hearts and deeds. "Not every one," says the Saviour, "that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. vii. 21. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John xiii. 17. "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James iv. 17. Read also 1 John ii. 1-4. There are particularly two places of Scripture which speak of the influence which our knowledge ought to exercise on our will and conversation. The first is Romans ii. 21-29; the other, James ii. 14-26, which I recommend you to read.

*Secondly.* The Bible does not require from us *faith* only, but also *repentance* and *sanctification.* The gospel positively requires, that we not only believe in Jesus, but also follow Him; we must return to God with repentance and confession of sin, we must be born again, transformed by the renewing of our minds, put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, put on the new man in righteousness and holiness, depart from iniquity, walk worthy of our calling, &c. See Matt. xvi. 24; Luke 15; Rom. xii. 2; 2 John iii. 3; Eph. iv. 12–24; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Tit. ii. 11; &c.

*Thirdly.* True faith is described in the Bible not only as a work of the mind, but also of the heart, and as exercising a vivid and powerful influence on our feelings and conduct. The words which are used in connection with "faith," do not express merely to

accept certain declarations as being true, but also, to rely, to lean on, to trust ourselves to some one else. Faith accepts Jesus Christ, makes us lean on Him, trust in Him. By faith we render ourselves to God and Jesus. By faith we are united with Christ, as the branches to the vine, so that abiding in Him, we bring forth much fruit. John xv. 4, 5. Faith purifies the heart, works by love, and overcometh the world. Acts xv. 9; Gal. v. 6; 1 John v. 4, 5.

And *lastly*, is not all this in correspondence with the nature of the case? By sincerely believing something which regards our happiness, can it be otherwise, but that belief will animate our inclinations and show itself in our conduct? And as the gospel discovers to us, facts by which we are infinitely interested, so follows it that our faith in them, must fill our hearts, and influence our words and deeds. What is the profit of knowledge, if our will and conduct follow the same unhappy road in which they went on before? If it does not lead us to God, in whose approbation, communion and service only rests our happiness? Let us then ever recollect: "Outward profession is insufficient. We must participate in that living faith in Christ Jesus, by which we become new creatures, and truly converted from sin unto God."

I may not omit to add here, the earnest warning of the Saviour in regard to those, who notwithstanding their knowledge, go on in sin: Luke xii. 47, 48. "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew

not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Here we have an assurance in perfect harmony with justice, an assurance of Jesus himself, who will judge the quick and the dead. But what may be the causes of this knowledge, this orthodoxy, without true faith, which we encounter in many people? This seems contradictory, and not at all corresponding with what we said in the foregoing section in regard to the will following the understanding.

Let me name *three causes*, together with their corresponding *remedies*.

*Firstly.* The correct ideas which we have obtained, cannot exercise any influence on our conduct, unless we possess that living faith which, worked in us by the Holy Spirit, accepts the truths on account of *their Divine authority.*

We must receive the revelations of Holy Scripture, as the Thessalonians had received them, "not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth,) the Word of God." 1 Thess. ii. 13. If that takes place, if these thoughts are living in our soul: *The Lord has spoken it; Jesus has said so, and therefore it must be the truth;* our faith obtains that firmness by which it necessarily will exercise an influence over our hearts; it will *work effectually in those that believe*, as was the case with the Thessalonians. But how is it with outward believers? They *suppose* merely the truths,

instead of *believing* them. They accept them, because their parents accepted them, and advised them to do the same, or because they find harmony between these truths, and reason and experience; their conviction being, therefore, more a reasoned affirmation of the gospel, than a sincere belief, because the God of truth has declared it by His Son. The *first remedy* against this malady, is therefore: *Seek for a living faith, which is founded on the Divine authority.* Joy to come, so far that it is sufficient unto you. *The Lord has spoken it.* Observe thereto, (under humble prayer to God, that He might work in you that Divine faith,) the indisputable proof for the Divine mission of Moses and the prophets, of Jesus and His apostles. Hear in the words of the Bible, the voice of God.

Others, and this I call a *second cause*, accept well the truths as truths, but do not behold them *in their importance and interest.* The greatness of the human misery, the unspeakable happiness in Jesus Christ, the power of the motives to practice virtue, they do not feel; and this is the reason that their heart is not affected by it. As a *second remedy*, we will therefore say: *Seek after a knowledge of the gospel in its importance and interest.* Pause often and attentively at the misery of sin, the brevity and insufficiency of worldly good, and the infinitely greater value of those heavenly and eternal riches which Jesus gives.

A *third cause* of this malady we find in men who believe the declarations of the gospel *in general, but not in regard to themselves.* There dwells a singular

depravity in the human soul, which causes that at the moment in which we hear or read the most important, interesting, or engaging truths, our thoughts wander in different directions, think about others, and forget ourselves. How many a hearer listens to the most vivid exposition of interesting truths which concern the soul, without thinking for a moment that the words which were spoken regarded himself. Under the representation of the misery and lost state of man as the consequence of sin, he coolly takes a pinch of snuff, falls asleep, or contents himself by judging the merits of the minister of the gospel who declares the Word of God. Are there many who never think of themselves in regard to the declarations of the gospel, there are others also who forcibly avoid doing so. And we therefore add this *third remedy: Seek to believe in the truths of the gospel* IN REGARD TO YOURSELF. And have you not sufficient reason to do so? Or will you alone make an exception in all mankind? What is true in regard to the whole human family, is that not true in regard to you? What God declares about all sinners, does He not declare the same of you?

Fellow sinner, whosoever you may be: *thou art the man!* Impress this upon your soul. Read and hear all that the gospel addresses to sinners, as if it were spoken to yourself alone. Pray therefore often to be enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit. O may you learn to bring those general truths home to your own heart, may you learn to think: "this declaration, this warning, this promise, this invita-

tion, is not only directed to others, but also to me;" and you will soon experience a faith within you which will reform your heart and show its influence in your words and deeds.

All nominal Christians, who confess the gospel merely with their lips, without living after it, are not exactly alike. They differ, for instance, herein, that they do not serve sin and the world *in the same degree*. The one is licentious; another serves the world with more restrictions; a third resembles in his conduct almost the truly pious, he is a hypocrite. Each one of these deserves our particular attention.

### Section V.

#### Address to a Libertine.

It is necessary to describe in a few words the character of Decius, to whom these words are addressed. Decius serves sin without any restriction. Deprived of all respect for God and His service, he not even observes the outward duties of religion. Prayer, the reading of the Bible, the attending on public worship, he leaves to "those melancholic persons, who behold every thing with a weeping eye, and who have no fancy for enjoying the world." His speech is rough and unbecoming. His conversation he imagines to be tame, unless it be mixed up in a great proportion with cursing and swearing. He rails against God, condemns true piety and exercises his wit in desecrating the Bible. He loves intemperance, debauchery, adultery. Bacchus and Venus are the idols which he worships. Disorderly, in consequence of this, in

his business, he spends all that he may possess. Low and vulgar in his words, he seeks friendship among persons of his own stamp, and amuses himself in such company who *walk in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries.* The Bible speaks often of the character of such people: see Gal. v. 19; 1 Peter iv. 3; Isaiah lvii. 20; iii. 9; Jer. iii. 3; vi. 15; Job xv. 25.

Perhaps you would prefer, Decius, not to be interrupted by some earnest warning. Permit me, however, to point out to you the evil and dangerous side of your conduct, the sources of your foolish behavior, and the correct means to restore you to the way of reason and virtue. It is a blessing to the man who, wild and senseless, rushes to the precipice, when we may recall him in time and lead him back at the very moment when he was ready to plunge into the fathomless deep!

What is sin? O Decius, could I impress you with true ideas of its horrible nature, how detestable would you appear to yourself! Sin is not only unreasonable, detestable, shameful in its nature, as it acts against convenience, against the most holy precepts of duty; it is not only revolting and strong against the great God of heaven and earth, our Creator, Lord, and Sovereign; but it is, moreover, the most ungenerous ingratitude, as committed against our great and good and adorable benefactor, to whom we owe all. Such SIN you commit! you commit daily without restriction, without fear, without any further thought. It may be abominable, never *too* abominable, as long as

it satisfies your lusts. It may be rebellion against the mighty power of God; in your opinion it is of little matter to oppose yourself against Him with an uplifted arm! It may be mere ingratitude against the God of Love; but to you it is an easy matter to despise a benefactor, who every moment is ready to bless you!

While God through the gospel offers you full pardon in the blood of Jesus Christ; your heart considers it a trifle to overcome that also, and rejects with a most deplorable obduracy the riches of His grace as well as the blessings of His goodness. Thus you act against that great and adorable God, who stretcheth the heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Thus you act under His all-seeing eye, in His immediate presence!

And what must be the sure consequences, Decius, of such conduct? Or do you suppose that it will remain unpunished? Do you suppose that you will not have to do with a God whose majesty is above the Heavens, who is too great to be scorned by His insignificant creatures? Do you suppose that you will not have to do with the holy and just God, who hates and punishes sin, and who although gracious in Jesus Christ, has declared that He will do severe justice unto him who willingly despises that salvation in Jesus? Do you think that you will have nothing to do with the great Lord over all who is a consuming fire for the wicked, who shall call to the Heavens from above and to the earth that he may judge his people; the true and faithful God who will

keep His threatenings as well as His promises, and who has positively declared that He will judge the world in righteousness, and that they who sow to the flesh shall reap of the flesh corruption?

You yourself believe (for I address a professor of religion) in a future life, and is it possible to believe that you are near either hell or heaven, and think lightly of both?

What may be the causes of your licentiousness? Allow me to enumerate them, and at the same time to serve you with some good council.

*A first cause is the unhappy prejudice that a public sinful life affords the greatest pleasures.* Confess it frankly, is that not your secret thought? Do you not love the pleasures of an irregular life? Do you not willingly sacrifice for them *duty*, *conscience*, and *eternal happiness?* But listen to me, Decius, and let me try to show you the contrary.

I readily admit that sin has the appearance of affording real pleasure. To live free, without caring about the duties or bonds of religion! To obtain the name of being above God and religion by swearing and ridiculing them. To riot in dissipation and intemperance, whoring and adultery, satisfying all desires and passions and lusts; to indulge in all the glittering and vain amusements of the world, to bathe in them after one's heart's desire, to have always some new pleasure in view to pass the time. O! it has at the first glance the appearance of a pleasant life! But it is *appearance*, and nothing more. In reality it is a way, *the end of which are ways of death.*

The consequences of sin are most terrible. They weaken the powers of the body, they injure health, and hasten the hour of death. They injure the faculties of the soul, render man brutish, choke in him all noble sentiments, and make him go from worse to worse. They disturb the order of society, destroy domestic happiness, peace, love, and prosperity. The fruits of a licentious life are uneasiness, fatigue, fear, remorse, shame, care, want, poverty, sorrow, destruction of body and soul, self-abhorrence, and contempt from others.

And will you know something more of the consequences of such a mis-spent life, Decius, behold the libertine on his death-bed. He feigns at first the same gaiety which was his former glory. He laughs at his sickness as long as he does not believe that it must end in death. But his case becomes more dangerous. Some one tells him that he must die. Now he experiences an uncommon fear. His conscience awakens and everything has taken a different appearance.

Formerly it seemed a trifle to abandon and forget God; now, no longer so. Terrible remorse pains his soul in remembering his past life. His sins appear before his sight in all their magnitude, and every pretext or excuse has left him. In looking into the future, his soul trembles at the sight of death, judgment, and eternity. O, to appear before the grand, omniscient, and undeceivable Judge, whose offer of pardon he has scorned and rejected! To tremble for the terrible signs of His majesty! To

hear the sentence of condemnation which seals his lot for eternity! That being condemned to a state of darkness, desperation, and misery, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched! All these thoughts clinch on him and make him tremble with fear! Now would he be willing to flee from the wrath to come; but alas, it is the penitence of the slave who fears the punishment. Moreover, the agony of death and the state of his body hinder the regular action of his mind. His friends flee from his death-bed. The world forsakes him. All his pleasures and lusts have left him forever. He dies. He dies as a despised, miserable being, in agony and despair, his name sinks into nothingness, and on his life and death we read in flaming characters: *Sin is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* And this, Decius, is that joyous, licentious life which pleases you? O, be not longer deceived by appearances!

*A second source of your wicked life was seduction.* Family happiness, the conversation in a limited circle of your father's friends could not longer satisfy you. The coffee-house and billiard-room became your selected resorts where you spent many an hour, many an evening. You could not longer do without them and became their slave. Among the decent visitors you found also some old sinners, some young men of disorderly habits. They became your friends. The company of your former friends became disgusting, and you looked upon the one, who kindly would warn you, as an enemy to your happiness. Now

little was wanting to poison your heart entirely and to make you a desirous listener to the voice of seduction. And therefore, Decius, do you feel inclined to return from those paths of iniquity; leave those false friends, flee those open friends of vice as you would flee a persecuting enemy. Avoid the places where they assemble. This above all is necessary to realize the hope of your recovery. They would laugh at you, if you were "so simple" as to listen to the voice of a faithful conscience. They would stifle your sober thoughts in the bustle of their noisy merriment, and every time destroy what the true friend of your happiness was trying to build up. Are seducers worthy of your friendship? To kill a soul is worse than murder. It is murder which extends into eternity!

*A third cause*, DECIUS, *was that at first you concluded to follow your sinful passions, when the voice of conscience was still speaking loudly within you.* You have not become all at once what you are now. You did not commit the first sinful act, without regret and shame following it. Your conscience spoke loud. O, why did you refuse to listen! but you repeated the same sin and with less remorse. In the course of time your heart became less sensitive. And thus you are brought into that most miserable condition where the passions have become your master—you their slave!

And is there still a remedy—have I a counsel even for you? Decius, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the

world to save sinners." He is able to do what man cannot. In His blood there is forgiveness for the most unworthy, and through His Word and Spirit He is mighty to break the power of sin in you, and to make you holy. O, may you thus believe in the gospel, so as to seek your salvation in Jesus, and to return through Him with confidence, to that God who justifieth the wicked. This will not only prove the way to forgiveness, but also to the gradual recovery of your deeply fallen nature.

O let it then become the language of your heart: *I will arise and go to my father.* Do this instantly, and Heaven will rejoice: *He was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found.*

### Section VI.

#### The more reserved worldly man.

Most people are not as bad as the licentious whom I have just described. Many guard themselves from committing those most degrading sins in word and deed, but are still very far from serving God. With all their outward civility, they are men of the world, who seek their happiness in this life, who make it their object to enjoy the world, and who prefer this to the favor and service of God.

One seeks his happiness in making money and in multiplying his capital. Another is most satisfied in enjoying all the comforts of a well-furnished table and anything which pleases the senses. A third could not live without his game of billiards or cards, the theatre, the club-room, and his course of visits among

"refined" society. Others again, know no greater pleasures than to be honored and adored, either by a display of their knowledge, wit or eloquence, or by their appearance, dress, or tact in serving the god of fashion. All these, how different soever they may be in taste, agree in this respect, that the world occupies that space in their hearts which, as the only and greatest good of man, ought to be filled by God.

The *causes* of this malady, it appears to me, are the following: *firstly, an erroneous opinion about God and the world.* Such people do not know the world in its vanity and insufficiency, and consider it as everlasting. They estimate it as the source from which to draw their real happiness. O, how engaging are its goods, its honors and pleasures! On the other hand, they do not know God as their greatest good. They do not understand the importance of finding in Him, a God, a friend, and father. They are predisposed against the way that leadeth to Him and against His service. This appears to them troublesome and melancholy.

A *second* cause is *the passionate tendency to sensual objects, and dislike of God.* In consequence of our original depravity we have become sensual men, in whose hearts the seeds are strewn of pride, voluptuousness, avarice, anger and other evil propensities, which need but very little, in order to grow and show themselves openly. Until the beginning of a new life is wrought in us, our sensuality makes us consider it an unpleasant and tiresome occupation to meditate about God, to commune with Him and to

approach Him in the way as shown in the blessed Gospel. And if we consider Him as the perfectly holy and just, who condemns our indulgence in sensual desires, our dislike of God will naturally increase. Thus is it that we love the world and idolize it, although we cannot deny the foolishness of our choice.

To this we may add, *thirdly, the want of a clearer insight into our true and miserable state as guilty and lost sinners.* As soon as we truly conceive *this*, we have lost our appetite for the greatest amusements, and we can find no rest until we have peace with God, being justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ; but the friend of the world has no clear ideas about the position he occupies in regard to God, and thus, ignorant of his danger, he goes smoothly on in the enjoyment of all that the world offers.

*Nothing is more necessary, however, than to be cured of this malady.* O, you, who love and serve the world, are many words needed to show you that your conduct is unbecoming and condemnable? A little reflection, only, and you will easily perceive how dishonoring it is to God to prefer the creature to the Creator, and to disobey your Maker, Lord, and benefactor, in order to satisfy your worldly desires and lusts.

It is unnecessary to *repeat* what I said about the happiness to be found in God, His favor, and His service; (see Vol. I. § 11;) but we will here consider together, in an earnest and impartial manner, what the world is, in the hope that it may convince your heart how foolish it is *to love and to serve the world*

*above God*, and how, therefore, the slavish attachment to that world is one of those disastrous evils of which you must most sincerely desire to be cured.

For what is the world? It is true, it offers us many enjoyments—enjoyments of some value, which, properly received, we must nor may not despise. It is a Christian precept, "to use the world as not abusing it." The desires for worldy good, honor, and lawful enjoyments are not to be destroyed, but tempered and regulated. But to seek *our happiness* in these things, to be satisfied with them—this is foolishness! There are two qualities which are inseparably united to everything of the world, which renders it impossible to find true happiness in it, *insufficiency* and *instability*.

The world is *insufficient* to satisfy our heart's desire. Whosoever you are, my reader, does not your experience affirm this saying? Perhaps you enjoy all the world can afford, but even then, tell me frankly, does this suffice you? Are you satisfied with it? Are you truly happy? Does there not remain a certain void in your heart which you cannot explain? Is your enjoyment never changed into annoyance, disgust, and inquietude? Have you never experienced, after desiring and passionately seeking for certain worldly good or pleasure, that when at last you obtained it, your imagination had drawn it in far more enchanting colors than it in reality proved to be? It cannot be otherwise. For our rational and immortal soul is capable of greater and nobler enjoyments than the world is able to give. "The world can never

give the bliss for which we sigh." Our soul longs for it, and is not at rest before obtaining it. Until then we remain unsatisfied, even among the fullest enjoyments of the world.

We named also its *instability*. How often does it leave us already in this life? Look at the riches, honor, fame, power, and pleasures of the senses, the comforts and conveniences of this life; and what is more uncertain and changeable than they really are? Who has not had occasion to observe the uncertainty of riches? How many means may God not use in the ways of His providence to deprive us gradually or instantly of our properties and revenues? How many persons are now despised who were honored before, how many hated who before were loved! How short and variable is often the applause of the world? How unexpectedly are the enjoyments of this life often destroyed by intervening circumstances, by the wrongs of our fellow-men, the unfaithfulness of friends, the unworthy conduct of relations, the misfortunes of those that are most dear to us, or the loss of them by death! O, what changes, what havocs, time makes in the circle of our friends! "*Alas, what is the world!*" do we mournfully exclaim, when we speak and weep over our lamented dead!

And are we unfortunate enough to possess nothing more than what that world gives, tell me, from where shall we draw consolation in experiencing all this? What will be our consolation when all that we desired has taken wings, and leaves us without possessing some resting good in ourselves? What will be our

consolation when circumstances plunge us in cares, anxieties, and mourning, if we miss that antidote which is the true Christian's relief, under the most difficult circumstances here below? What will be our consolation when death knocks at our door, when we must bid farewell to our beloved world, when the awful moment comes for which our nature trembles, that we have to depart, if we have no friend in God who can lead us in and over the grave—if we do not behold then a Heaven before us, but tremble before a terrible eternity?

The world shall surely leave us at the hour of death. "It is appointed unto all men once to die," *and we know not the day of our death.* Let a man possess all that he possibly could wish for, when death comes it is all finished; of all his treasures and pleasures he can take nothing with him in the grave, where he goeth; he is then equal with the poorest and humblest of his fellow-men. There he awakens in an awful eternity. Of all his labors he finds out he cannot reap any fruit, and the bread that feedeth forever, he has rejected! Now he misses God and all the enjoyments of the senses; now he misses Heaven and earth, and he retains nothing but sorrow, remorse, and after-repentance. What is more, now he sees that he has sacrificed the time, in which he could have escaped from the wrath to come, for a handful of dust.

He resembles an exiled rebel, to whom pardon was offered by his king, but who, instead of returning to his country within the fixed time, spent his time in

all kinds of frivolous amusements, and now becomes the guilty cause of his own ruin. Tell me, my reader, can you name me anything more absurd, more foolish, for a rational being, who possesses an immortal soul, who is created for eternity, than to love such a world above God? Is there a more pernicious malady than this? O, may this exposition, under the help of God's Holy Spirit, awake in you, who prefer the world to God, the desire of getting cured of it.

And is that desire within you? Do you ask for the remedies? They are these: Contemplate often the world, not as it appears to be, but as it really is, insufficient to secure your happiness. Endeavor to live under vivid impressions of the instability of the world. *Remember to die.* And think, at the same time, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Try to be cured of your prejudices in regard to God and religion. Meditate how unbecoming you act, how guilty you render yourself by your love to the world, and how much God deserves to be loved and served by you. Seek after a true conception of the dangerous state in which you live, so that it may hinder your thoughtlessly worshipping the world. And *lastly, this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith: To believe* in truth, in the declarations and promises of the gospel, in regard to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and the infinite love of God in Christ towards sinners; *to believe* in Jesus as He has given himself for our sins, so that He might draw us from this pre-

sent and evil world; *to confide* our worldly hearts to Him to be healed; *to do this*, and at the same time, trusting in the power of Jesus for the happiest result, to avoid worldly conversation, to watch, to strive and pray against the world's temptations, these are the remedies to heal us from an inordinate love of the world.

### Section VII.

### The Hypocrite.

Among the different classes of the servants of this world, we also find some, alas, who with all their love to the world, take the outward form of godliness, without possessing its power in the soul. The *hypocrite* adopts cunningly, the outward form of godliness, in order to favor his worldly interests and views. He imitates in the expression of his face, his speech and dress, the earnest zeal and humility of the truly pious; draws the attention of the multitude, but omits the weightier matters of the law; and covers with the cloak of piety, a heart of corruptness and sin. The Saviour has drawn the character of such men, which he found among the Pharisees of his time, in the most vivid colors. "All their works," says Jesus, "they do for to be seen of men; they make broad their phylactaries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." "They devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence, made long prayers." They "com-

passed sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, they made him two-fold more the child of hell, than themselves." They cleaned "the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within, they were full of extortion and excess." When giving alms, they "sounded a trumpet before them, to have the glory of men." They prayed, "standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men." When they fasted, they "disfigured their faces," and showed a "sad countenance, that they might appear unto men to fast." In short, they were "like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

Although the world is apt, from a principle of enmity against true piety, to cry out, *hypocrite*, over the truly pious, and thereby exaggerates their number; we cannot deny, however, if we trust in the Bible and our own experience, that there are really such monsters in the world, who even mix together with the sincere and virtuous.

The impure and principal source of this horrible malady, is no doubt *that most extravagant love to the world, in particular to honor and profit*, which fears not to use the basest means to arrive at its object; secondly, *a hardness of heart for impressions from God and for Divine perfection*, by which we can consider it a trifle to mock God Almighty and holy religion; and lastly, *the want of that sense of God's omniscience and omnipresence*, from which the shrewdest hypocrite cannot hide himself.

Regarding either the monstrous character of this sin or the terrible punishment which awaits the hypocrite, we behold in it a most deplorable malady; and it is our duty, with God's help, to rescue wherever we have the occasion, those who are thus afflicted. And therefore, should those pages meet, perchance, the eye of one who attempts to deceive in this manner, God and men, I would beseech him to read a few lines more. Allow me to take away the cloak which covers your horrible figure, and to show you what a monster you are. What are you doing? You deceive your fellow-men, presenting yourself in a different character from what you really bear, in order to build your prosperity on the pious, unsuspecting belief of others; and you are not only guilty of misleading them; for since you got hold of the idea to act the hypocrite, your whole life has become the execution of a well-studied plan of deceit. You have renounced all honesty and sincerity. Debased, instead of bearing the image of God, you have chosen the image of the devil. You throw a blame on the truly pious, and cause the name of God to be calumniated, by not only deceiving others, but predisposing them against the noble and blessed service of God. And in order to accomplish this, you fear not to handle that which is holy, to misuse religion, and to mock the almighty and everlasting God! Miserable creature, how abominable must be your wickedness, as the meek and lowly Jesus could not speak of this sin without using the strongest expressions of noble indignation and severest reproof. Read the 23d chapter

of Matthew, where you find yourself portrayed with the faithfulness of Jesus; and you must feel alarmed in beholding your image! But still *more* reason to be alarmed you will have, by thinking of the bitter and miserable lot that awaits you in eternity. "Ye fools and blind," says Jesus, "Woe unto you hypocrites!" and eight times he repeats that. Woe unto you, "ye serpents, ye generation of vipers; how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Read also with attention, Job. viii. 13; Isaiah xxxiii. 14; Matt. xxiv. 51. And above all, I must call your attention to the warning of the Saviour, which we read in Luke xii: "First of all, beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, for there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." No sins, no evil intentions, are so hid or veiled in your heart, or in your secret life, but they are known to God, and will be known to men. *God knoweth the secrets of the hearts, all things are naked and opened unto His eyes*, He regards *all our iniquities*, and *our most secret sins, in the light of His countenance. They will be known unto men*, often already in this life, either the hypocrite betraying himself, or Divine Providence using some way to unmask him before his fellow-men; but once they will all be known in that great and awful day, when every man's works shall be brought unto judgment, be they open or secret, good or evil works. And where will, then, the hypocrite be able to hide himself, when his mask shall be taken off, in presence of the whole world, when all those who honored and

respected him here on earth, will look upon him with horror and indignation!

Should there perhaps be one, who has found in these pages his own likeness, who with deep-felt repentance for the evil of which he is guilty, and beholding the dangerous position in which he has brought himself, was to ask me: is there still hope, and help for me? I would answer: Even for you, even for the sin of hypocrisy, there is pardon and help from God in Jesus Christ; and in order that you may still more earnestly desire, and truly receive this, let me advise you to use the following *means* for your recovery: meditate often on the vanity of honor by men and worldly gain. Pause often at the degrading nature of hypocrisy, and its fearful consequences. Try to live under vivid impressions of God's greatness and all His attributes, but particularly of His omniscience and omnipresence. Remember thereto, every day and every hour, the language of Jehovah. Jerem. xxiii. 23, 25. "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any one hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." And lastly, go as you are, with all your hypocrisy, and seek refuge with God in Jesus Christ, looking on the forgiving and healing grace, which may be found in Him, confess your heinous sin, and your guilt, acknowledge your deplorable inclination to insincerity, and make it your daily prayer: "Remove from me the way of lying, turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. Let my heart be sound in

the statutes, that I be not ashamed. I have chosen the way of truth. Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth."

### Section VIII.

#### The Careless and Insensible.

It is possible to belong to the three classes of men which we have described, without being destitute of some earnest thought and reflection; but a great number of people live carelessly and insensibly, from day to day, and from year to year, in the service of sin. Their character will now claim our attention.

The *careless* are the same in regard to their spiritual interest, which, for a different cause, are called by the prophet Amos: *them that are at ease in Zion and trust in the mountain of Samaria.* They are in the greatest danger of being forever unhappy, as they are without faith in Christ, without conversion to God, and blind to the dangerous position in which they live. They are ignorant of the value of their souls, ignorant of the great importance of being not only happy here on earth, but happy in eternity. They are blind to what they have done, to what they are, who God is, and to the lot which awaits them. They say: *the evil day shall not overtake nor prevent us*, they speak of *peace*, although they walk after the lusts of their heart. They may be careful about many things, but they are indifferent about the salvation of their souls. From morning until night, they toil and labor for their temporal welfare, or divide their time between occupation and

pleasures, without thinking earnestly one moment about God, their soul, death, judgment and eternity. Thus they pass their years in a kind of stupidity or drowsiness, caring for everything except for the *most needful part*, and are at ease and quiet, although surrounded by dangers, which filleth the heart that knoweth them, with fear and trembling.

The *insensible* differ from the *careless* only herein, that they possess but a still greater measure of indifference or carelessness; an indifference which continues, notwithstanding the strongest means which may be used to arouse the sufferer from his profound sleep. In vain are your exhortations, in vain the expositions of mercy to which sin has brought them, in vain the joyful tidings of God's lovingkindness in our blessed Saviour; in vain your speaking to them of God's Omniscience or Omnipresence, of death and judgment, of Hell or Heaven; in vain all reminding them of the riches of God's lovingkindness, long-suffering and grace. Neither the terror of the Lord or the entreating language: *Be reconciled unto God*, produces any effect on their souls. Their hardened hearts are neither to be softened by the Gospel, nor broken by the Law. Neither the most sublime proof of God's majesty in nature, nor the most striking incidents in the ways of His providence, calamities nor dangers, have any influence on their hearts. No chastening can humble them, no love affect them. "Their heart is waxed gross, their ears are dull of hearing, their eyes they have closed, lest at any time

they should hear and see and understand with their heart, and be converted."

Terrible malady! To be miserable, without caring for that misery; in dangers, and blind to them; living quietly, as if "all was right," without seeking for the means to be saved, or a way to escape! And what must then become of the careless and insensible sinner? He is the most unhappy being that we can name. He is miserable, and remains so because his misery does not alarm him in the least. The most imminent dangers hang over his head, but because he does not see them, he continues indifferently his way. He continues in his road, and every step brings him nearer to death. He is like the careless child, that plays on the brink of a precipice. And if he does not awake from his state of drowsiness in time, he must surely awake when death will have conducted him into a terrible eternity, and all hope to be saved from the awful calamities which await him, and which he never foresaw, will be forever lost!

And what remedies may we prescribe for such unhappy mortals? In order to find this out, let us look for a moment at the causes of their maladies. They are these: 1. *Ignorance of those truths of the gospel, which regard our miserable and dangerous state in consequence of sin.* It naturally follows that we cannot be alarmed over things which we do not know. 2. *Indifference about these truths in regard to ourselves.* Many know these truths, but by a singular depravity of the heart, they avoid bringing them home to their own soul. 3. *The cares and*

*troubles, the intercourse and the various pleasures of the world*, which render them like to dreaming men, and deprive them of their time and occasion for any earnest reflection or thought. 4. *A certain hardness of heart which belongs to the depravity of the soul, by which we often are least affected by those things which ought to leave the deepest impressions.* What pious man is there, who must not complain of the unhappy remains of this hardness of heart, or as the prophet Ezekiel calls it, a *stony heart.* How often do we experience it ourselves, that we are but little affected by the most interesting truths, notwithstanding the clearest conviction of our mind; but little moved, in contemplating the majesty of God in Nature and in Revelation! And as a *fifth* cause, we must add that the *indifferent have suppressed and obstructed their former good impressions and resolutions;* the consequence of which, generally, will be a hardness and indifference for such things, as before would have affected them. If the careless and insensible would he restored, it will be necessary that the eyes of their understanding be opened, for the truths in regard to their fallen and miserable state; that they behold it with regard to themselves; that they be taken away from the inebriating influence of the world; that the hard and stony ground of their hearts be made soft and sensible, by the power of the Spirit of Him who is able to quicken the spiritually dead, and who by different circumstances knew how to turn the heart of a careless and indifferent "keeper of the prison," and bring him to such a vivid sense of his

danger, that he fell down before Paul and Silas, and trembling, asked them: *Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*

And what advice shall we now give to the careless and indifferent? Shall we address them: "Try to obtain a clear insight into those truths of the gospel, which regard your unhappy position. Consider them in regard to yourself. Guard against a mode of life by which the world would occupy all your time and thoughts. Pray often to God, who is able 'to take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and to give you a heart of flesh,' that He may heal you from your indifference by the power of His grace." This advice is certainly correct, and may prove effectual to those who commence already *to perceive the danger* of their insensibility; but for the real careless and insensible, we have to do something more, as they will be indifferent even about the means for their recovery. They are to be recommended to the care and pity of others who behold their danger, and upon whom rests the obligation of earnestly warning them, of showing them the enormity of the danger in which they constantly move forward, and of presenting them in their prayers to the God of all grace, who is able to turn the most insensible heart. O may ministers of the gospel be faithful in this part of their mission; may they preach the misery into which we are brought by sin, as well as the duties and consolations of religion! May it please God to bring these pages under the eyes of many people of this class, and may they pause at the important reasons which I will bring

forward, to show them the greatness of their danger, in neglecting any longer the interests of their immortal souls! Allow me then, my dear fellow-men, to show you, *in the first* place, *what you have done.* You have greatly sinned against the Lord, your God. One may have sinned in a greater degree than the other—this sentence, however, regards all of us: "The whole world is guilty before God." Compare yourselves with the duties which the law of God prescribes, and let your own conscience decide, whether in your secret or public life, in thoughts, desires, passions, resolutions, and deeds, you have kept that law, or whether you have sinned against the love to God, towards yourself and to your fellow-men; often and oftentimes sinned, so that it would be easier to count the sand of the sea than your sins? And thus you have sinned against the great God of heaven and earth. Against God, your Maker, Lord, and Sovereign! Against God, whose commandments are all perfect, good, and just! Against God, your benefactor, who has borne so long with you and never ceased to bless you — against God, your merciful Father, who has placed you under the preaching of salvation, through Jesus Christ and His adorable grace in Him, who does not leave off to warn you and to invite you to return unto Him! This you have done, and now decide whether it is foolishness or wisdom to lay under so deep a guilt, and remain at ease and unalarmed.

*Secondly.* I must remind you of *what you are.* Man (this is the touching description which the Bible

gives of man as he has become by sin, as, for instance, Romans i., ii., iii., vi., vii., viii.,) man is excluded from communion with God, he does not longer bear His image, he is fallen. A mournful depravity has extended itself over all his faculties. His mind is obscured in a deplorable manner. He is blind to the most important facts in regard to his eternal happiness. His judgment is apt to err. His imagination and memory are filled with vain objects. His heart is insensible, averse from good and desirous after evil. His passions are irregular. His body is a body of sin and of death. He is a servant of sin, a slave of his passions, and utterly unable to save himself from his fallen state.

Remember, *thirdly*, *who God is*. His Word declares Him unto you as the Omniscient, the Omnipresent, who knows all your sins; as your Lord and Sovereign, who beholds all your acts; who being holy cannot permit evil, and being just will surely punish sin. He declares unto you that He is reconciling the world unto Him in Christ, and invites you: *Be reconciled unto God*, but also that His wrath remains upon all that do not accept that reconciliation in Christ Jesus, and who disobey the Son of God; and, lastly, that He has appointed a day on which He will judge the whole world in righteousness, and also *you*, whosoever you may be, of what age or rank—YOU will be called before that judgment seat, and according to your conduct you will be justified or condemned for all eternity.

Consider then, *fourthly*, *what will be your reward*

*if you proceed in the same state in which you now live.* After having lived without the peace, the consolation, and joy of religion, and under the cares, and fears, and disappointments, and remorse, produced by sin, at last death will approach and deprive you of all that was dear to you in this world, without giving you any thing in exchange. You then enter a dark eternity, deprived of the good of this world, excluded from Heaven, and already experiencing the remorse of conscience, the miserable consequences of sin. You will rise from the dead to give an account before your Judge, of all the deeds you have done, and to hear from him the sentence of eternal punishment, which is presented in the Bible under the most awful figures of a gnawing worm that never dieth, of a fire that never will be quenched. Much might be said of the terrible nature of future punishment—much of its horrors, remorse, after-repentance, loss, destruction, and everlasting duration—but I intended to give you merely some outlines for your own reflection; and now I would ask you: Tell me candidly, is it rational, is it pardonable, being exposed to the danger of undergoing that punishment, to live on quietly and unalarmed?

Remember *lastly, the shortness and uncertainty of the time which is left you to escape that eternal perdition.* To-day you are living yet under the preaching of the blessed Gospel, the word of reconciliation; but this is certain, that the time of returning to God is limited to this life, and that when death overtakes you in your state of carelessness and indifference,

you are lost forever. And this day of your death! How uncertain is it not. How soon may it be present! How many examples do you daily behold who preach to you the brevity and uncertainty of life! How many of your fellow-men were called to eternity in the midst of their indifference! If we regard the many examples of unexpected, accidental, sudden death, it appears inconceivable how a man can quietly commence *one* single day, go to rest one single night, *yea, live one single hour*, before he has taken care of his eternal happiness, before he is reconciled with God. And can you deny that you have most important reasons now for earnest reflection and care? Or is it rational to continue carelessly your road, knowing that you are near a fathomless deep? Is it rational to sleep on the top of the mast when the vessel is tossed by the mighty waves? O, be this moment the last of your careless life, and should this exposition of your danger have made any impression upon your soul; pray, I beseech you, pray God that He may preserve that impression, and behold and examine every thought which may engage you henceforth to labor for the well-being of your immortal soul!

## CHAPTER II.

OF THE MALADIES OF MEN OF SOME REFLECTION, BUT WHO, FROM DIFFERENT CAUSES, PROCEED IN THE WAYS OF SIN, OR ARE HINDERED AT LEAST FROM ENTERING THE ROAD THAT LEADETH TO LIFE.

### Section IX.

#### Introduction.

In the foregoing chapter we beheld men who walked in the paths of sin *without* any reflection; we must now look to those who have some reflection about their best and eternal interests, who are not altogether careless and insensible about their salvation, but who from different causes, still proceed in the ways of sin, or at least are hindered from entering the road that leadeth to life.

I said *from different causes*, they proceed in sin; for some *use pretexts, in mis-using important truths, to defend their sins and to quiet their consciences;* others *repose on erroneous grounds, and take some wrong way to obtain peace for their soul and eternal salvation*, in others lastly, *their religious conviction takes still a wrong direction.* Each of these three classes of men we will contemplate separately.

PART FIRST.—OF MEN, WHO USE SOME PRETEXTS, IN MIS-USING IMPORTANT TRUTHS, TO DEFEND THEIR SINS AND TO QUIET THEIR CONSCIENCES.

### Section X.

Mis-use of the doctrine of human depravity and of temptations.

This is one of the pretexts we often meet with. Crito knows full well that he does not live as he ought; but, says he, "Is it astonishing that I am what I am, and act as I act? Mankind is so depraved that we cannot expect anything else but sin. O we are such feeble creatures! Who can be what he ought to be? When I look round in the world, I see that other men do not do better than I, and every one has his own faults." Very unjustly, Crito misuses here the doctrine of human depravity, for

*Firstly.* He commits sin, notwithstanding his depravity, by his own free will, and becomes therefore guilty and condemned. His depravity is not of a nature that he is forced by a deplorable necessity to do evil, as steam-power forces the wheel to turn round. Let him consider himself, and see whether he does not commit the evil he does willingly, from his own free choice, whether his conscience does not reproach him after he sinneth, and whether this does not prove his guilt?

*Secondly.* The excuse of Crito proves too much. If his depravity can excuse him, then this depravity is a just excuse for others. Then he cannot condemn his neighbor for deceiving him, or stealing his property; then murderers and incendiaries may use the

same pretext, and say: *Our nature is so depraved; O man is such a feeble creature!*

*Thirdly.* That depravity is not an excuse, as there are means of recovery in the salvation, through Christ, and the forgiving and healing grace of God in Him; to which Crito ought to fly for refuge, but which means he refuses to use.

*Lastly.* It is true wherever he goes, Crito will find sinful men, who have their faults, but there is, however, a great difference between one man and his neighbor. Pious men who mourn their depravity and strive against it, may prove what man, with the help of God, can attain. Do not lead your deceived heart astray! Perfect holiness is impossible on this side of the grave, but the beginning of sincere holiness is certainly attainable here below.

"My conduct must astonish me the less," continues Crito, "as the Bible teaches me that the devil worketh powerfully in the children of disobedience. O, he keeps me constantly in his snares. Now he produces this—presently some other evil in my heart. Now he tempts me to this, presently to some other sin. It is unfortunate, but, however, it cannot be helped." This excuse would have some foundation, if the doctrine of the Bible taught that Satan worked in such a manner on the human heart, that his power is irresistible, but the Bible knows nothing of such a doctrine. The temptations of evil spirits, are like the temptations of evil men, who present to us sin in a charming dress, but cannot force us to commit sin against our will. According to the Bible there is a

remedy against temptation; resistance, faith, watchfulness and prayer, are the appointed means. The Saviour's especial command is: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And in His precept of prayer: "After this manner, therefore, pray ye; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." The Apostle James gives us the advice: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Chap. iv. 7. Compare Eph. vi. 11; 1 John iii. 8; iv. 4. He who neglects these means, must attribute to himself the evil into which he falls.

"And after all," thus concludes Crito, "can I feel bad about it if I do not change my manner of life, considering the circumstances in which I am placed in this world? Such a slavish and distracting business, such a large family, so many affairs to attend to, so many troubles and cares which turn a man's head! I do not see a chance to think about anything else." That this last excuse is entirely worthless, may be proved by the examples of those who serve the Lord, and are placed in the same circumstances as Crito. The Lord helps us, if we seek Him, according to our need. Moreover, let Crito's conscience testify whether there remains truly, no time for the *one thing needful.* And suppose this were a fact—ought he then not to make such changes in his affairs, as *to find time* for an interest which goes above all? Would it not be our duty to leave an employ which would separate us from every occasion, to live for God and eternity? The religion of the Gospel, is

adapted to all kinds of men, under all kinds of circumstances. Remember the Saviour's question: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

### Section XI.

#### Mis-use of the doctrine of God's mercifulness.

Claudius cannot deny that he walks in the paths of sin, and now and then he hears the complaining voice of conscience. But how does he quiet himself? "God is merciful," thinks he, "and how could He then suffer that one of His creatures should be lost? No, I have formed kinder ideas about God. Even should I continue in doing evil, God would pity me. His goodness has no limits. Man speaks of justice, of judgment, of chastisement, of eternal punishments; but we know how man loves to exaggerate things. This will not be as bad as it is represented. In one word, I cannot expect such terrible consequences from my manner of life as I hear preached."

Truly, Claudius, God is merciful, and you cannot form too extended ideas of His mercy. But now, to derive from this, that we may persevere in sin, and still be saved, is so contradictory, that I do not see how rational beings can take hold of the idea. Give me for a moment your attention, and let us consider,

*Firstly, the nature of the case.* To persevere in sin, and to inherit salvation, are two opposite things, which destroy one another. Sin, as we have seen before, produces, in its own nature, the most miserable consequences, to render man unhappy in body and

soul. But how is it now possible, with all the compassion of God, to go on in sin and still be exempted from its inseparable consequences? To ask this, is the same as if you would willingly throw yourself in the flames and suppose: "God is so merciful, that I trust He will not suffer that I should burn." True peace, contentment and joy; in other words, the salvation of the soul, is only produced (as we have seen before) by communion with God, in returning to Him, in the knowledge of Him, in obedience and conformity to Him. That is great. That is noble. That is happiness. But if a person is unwilling to return to God, and remains in sin, how will God's mercifulness make him feel himself happy, when he refuses to accept the only means which, in the unchangeable nature of things, can render him happy? If the prodigal Son had not *returned*, how could he have participated in the joy of his home, notwithstanding all the kindness of his father?

Moreover, if you live and die in sins, you are unfit for other enjoyments, except those which the world alone can give you. But now imagine your soul in eternity, separated from its worldly good, its pleasures, its society, its only sources of enjoyment, possessing nothing, as it never laid up any treasures which would last forever. Can the mercy of God change this order of things? Imagine yourself only that *loss*, that unsupportable *tediousness?*

*Secondly.* Is it not foolish to quiet oneself with the mercifulness of God, without considering His justice? That same Word which declares unto you,

"God is merciful," preaches unto you, often and often, that the "righteous Lord loveth righteousness;" that "whatsoever a man soweth, that he shall also reap;" that "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness." Ps. xi. 7; Gal. vi. 7; Acts xvii. 31. "But," you say, "is it not in the nature of mercy to exercise pity over the miserable?" No doubt. But if he who is merciful appears in the capacity of judge, he may behold the punishment of the miscreant with pity and compassion, but still he will be bound to exercise justice unto the transgressor. Without this, the majesty of the law, all peace and moral order would be entirely destroyed. God, though infinitely merciful, is, however, not a simple Being who bestows his blessings with a blindfold love. He is no private person, but the Ruler of the world, whose honor and majesty, as well as the interest of the world, demand that He should maintain the majesty of His laws.

"But is God's justice not satisfied and illustrated by Jesus Christ?" Certainly; but not so as to give a permit to the impenitent sinner to go quietly on in the paths of sin.—Claudius, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, *and thou shalt be saved.* Honor the salvation in His blood, return, through Him in penitence to God, and you will experience His mercy in the most adorable manner. In that way God is merciful to the greatest sinner. But if the sinner rejects the way which God has appointed, and perseveres in sin, then you will feel that the slighted salvation

will be of no use to him, but on the contrary, it will aggravate his guilt, by adding to his other sins the greatest despisal, even that of God's forgiving love in Christ Jesus.

Claudius, one remark more, which must affect your heart. How ignoble is the conclusion: "God is infinitely merciful; *therefore* may I proceed in refusing Him my love, in trampling upon His laws, and in hardening my heart against His warnings."

O, my friend, that is as much as if a child said of his father: "My father is so kind. He pitieth me always. And *therefore* will I cause him the more penible grief; *therefore* will I go on in being ungrateful and disobedient, and reject all his lessons and warnings."

### Section XII.

Mis-use of God's long-suffering and grace, in order to delay conversion.

Not less common is the abuse of the doctrine of God's long-suffering and grace in Jesus Christ, even towards those who return to God in the eve of life, or on their death-bed. Aristus is convinced of the necessity of conversion. He cannot yet, however, assent to this change of heart and conversation. He loves to enjoy, for some time yet, the sinful pleasures of the world. But what is his plan? He flatters himself with some future conversion. Says he, "God is gracious in Jesus Christ, but He remains so for the sinner as long as he lives on this side of the grave. It is not too late to return to Him even on

our dying bed. Many enter at the eleventh hour. A murderer was converted on the cross. It is therefore not necessary to press my conversion. When I shall be a little older, less troubled with others things, when my passions shall have lost their first strength, when this and that object, which may not be altogether right, shall have been accomplished, *at a more convenient season*, I will choose a different mode of life altogether. Or if it should please God, sooner or later to confine me to a bed of sickness, I shall have opportunity to humiliate myself before Him and return to Him. In one word, although I do not think about conversion to-day, it is nevertheless my decided intention to be converted before I die." I entreat Aristus, and all that suffer of the same malady, to reflect earnestly on the following observations.

*Firstly. Faith and conversion, which must be exercised by us in this life, are of such a nature that it requires time to learn to practice them aright. We can therefore never commence too early.* Nothing is less true than that faith and conversion are the work of a few moments; that the sinner all at once should become a converted and believing Christian. No faith, (this every one will admit who is somewhat familiar with the nature of faith and of true conversion,) no faith is obtained without study, accompanied by constant prayer to God for His enlightening Spirit. No conversion is produced or continued without that knowledge which inspires us with love to God and hatred to sin, without applying the means

for recovery, without practice in well-doing, and in constantly resuming the war against evil; and as all necessarily requires time, we can never commence such a work one day too early. Ought we not to be afraid of letting *one* day pass by on which we are in possession of health and the use of all mental faculties, without attending to this important work?

*Secondly. It is necessary not to delay our conversion to God; as instead of becoming easier, the work becomes heavier and more difficult every day we defer it.* How much more appropriate to this work are our early days, when we are healthy and strong, when the mind is clear and the heart sensible, than the evil days of old age, when the faculties of body and mind are declining, and the cares and infirmities of life are multiplied. Moreover, the longer we commit evil, the more we get accustomed to it, the more it becomes a habit, which increases in difficulty to relinquish. The power of our passions gains in strength in the same proportion as we follow them up. And not only this, but all good impressions faint away when they are not fostered but suppressed. If one says with a Felix, *go thy way for this time*, and silences conscience, and tries to hinder for some time the good impressions which he received, by drawing his attention from them, or by abandoning himself to the pleasures of life, they will not harass him long but leave him entirely, his heart will become more hardened than ever before, and the most imposing expositions, which in earlier days could have affected him, have no longer any power over his soul.

How awfully are these remarks affirmed by the doctrine of Revelation in regard to the workings of the Holy Spirit; who, when man has striven long enough against His influence, when long enough He has been grieved and quenched, withdraws His workings, leaves off striving any longer, and abandons the sinner to his own depravity and darkness. O Aristus, to-day you are not quite indifferent about your eternal interest, but if you delay your conversion, I must make the sad announcement that your good impressions will gradually diminish and at last entirely depart from you. More and more you will become the slave of your cherished sins. You will grow worse and worse. The most earnest warnings will leave you cold and indifferent. Yea, tremble at the idea; you, who at present are still affected by a word of tenderness and interest, you may live to see the day in which you will have become the greatest enemy of true piety and godliness!

*Thirdly. Delay of conversion is the more condemnable, because it is so noble, so glorious, to enjoy the friendship of God and to serve Him, that we must consider every day, that we neglect seeking for it, as lost.* Aristus, I will attack you here from a different side, and make an endeavor on your generosity. When we urge you to believe in Jesus, to return to God, to practice virtue and piety; what do we ask then from you? To commit acts which abase you, and would deprive you of enjoyment? No: we ask nothing but what is truly noble, grand, and conducive to your happiness even in this world. The value of

the friendship of God in Christ Jesus, the excellency, the loveliness, and joy of His service, we have shown already on some former occasion, and is it rational, is it worthy our calling to defer this? *To-day* we poor sinners, are privileged by the Most High to find peace in Christ, and would we wait one moment longer before accepting it?

*To-day* we enjoy the privilege to be called to the most noble and happy service, and will we make it our language: "Until this, or that day, I will remain without God and His holy service. Until this or that day, I will bathe myself in sin. Until this or that day, I will abuse God's grace, in order to be at liberty to sin against Him; and when I cannot do otherwise, when the world leaves me, I will seek refuge with that same gracious God."

*Fourthly. Delay is wrong, because the object of conversion is not only to be happy in eternity, but also to pass our time well in this present world, and to answer the end for which we are placed here.* Is it indifferent to us, how we spend our time here below, if we be converted only in time to escape the Divine wrath, and to become happy in Heaven? Are we content to call on God in the last moments of life, and to enter at the eleventh hour? What a base idea! No, as God has placed us here to be employed for His honor, for our own perfection, for the benefit of others, so must we endeavor in our conversion, to respond to this object of our sojourn in the world. If we neglect this, what will be our sorrow, when we shall review a mis-spent life! What must be the

sorrow of the gray-headed sinner, whom it pleased God to convert in his old age! "Alas, (thus will his soul complain,) why have I not made this choice in the days of my youth! How much good could I have performed in my lifetime! but alas, I have lived as an unprofitable servant. How many sins have I added unto sins! How much time have I murdered! How many occasions to do good, did I leave unimproved! How much harm have I done by conversation, example, and deeds, to my children, my household, friends, and fellow-men! Some have already gone to eternity, whom I never warned, but rather encouraged to persist in sin. O, could I but recall the years that are gone!"

*Lastly. Delay of conversion is most dangerous, on account of the brevity and uncertainty of life.*

The moment we die, the time for conversion has gone forever. And how soon may that moment be present! What calculation can we make upon life? O Aristus, if death should call on you in the hour you thought not, unprepared for the important change; do you not tremble at the mere thought of the destiny which would await you? To appear unprepared before God, will always be terrible, but after having been convinced of the necessity of conversion without coming to a resolution; having lived in the thought of waiting for a more convenient season, with the expectation of never to suffer endless misery; and then to be called suddenly into eternity! There terribly to awake from the deceiving dream! There to behold, that we deceived ourselves with the hope of a

future conversion! O that disappointment, that remorse, that painful sensation of experiencing, and beholding a future of everlasting misery, which we never expected to suffer; who is able to describe, to form an idea of it in all its terror, as it truly will be? But perhaps, Aristus, you will say: "I am too young yet. My age is not proper for that earnestness which religion requires. Must I now bid farewell already to all the pleasure of life. Must I already expose myself to the sneers, which piety generally has to bear?" But my friend, are there no other pleasures than those that spoil the heart, awake the passions, flatter the pride, debase our character, and which are incompatible with the earnestness of the gospel? Are there not thousands of innocent amusements which God has provided, and which we enjoy but the more, in loving God? And are these yet to be compared with the true enjoyments which religion affords? After all, must pleasure weigh heavier in the balance, than duty? O Aristus, is that great and glorious God, your Creator, preserver, and benefactor, who has blessed you in your early years, with so many privileges and enjoyments; is that God, not worthy that you devote to Him the spring-time of your life? O, be impressed with your obligations! Remember what you are. *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth!*

But perhaps you are not so alarmed by your delay of conversion, in the hope, that at the approach of the hour of death, you will still have time to repent, and thus prevent the menacing punishment. I admit

that such death-bed conversions are not impossible; but besides that, they must leave many doubts, whether they were merely produced by the fear of punishment and death, instead of arising from pure motives, as experience has proved in cases where the persons recovered from their sickness; besides this, I ask you: is there anything more dangerous, than this waiting for the last chance? Are you sure that you will have a dying-bed? Are you sure that you will not die from a sickness which, from the first moment, may deprive you of the use of your mental faculties?

Do you believe that you will consider your last sickness as the one that will bring you to the grave? In the beginning you will consider it an indisposition of little importance. You will continually flatter yourself with the hope of recovery. Although the danger increases you will be blind to it, and your friends will carefully avoid telling you so, for fear of alarming you. At last your case will be hopeless, and then . . . . . O have you ever seen a dying man at the gates of death? Have you observed how the pains of the body, how the uncommon fears of the soul by the sudden aspect of death, how the tears of family and friends, how the last farewell, how all circumstances worked together to affect the dying and to refuse him the shortest season of calm reflection or occupation? Have you seen this, Aristus, and can you still in earnest believe "the hour of death is the true season of preparing for eternity?

### Section XIII.

Mis-use of the doctrine of Predestination.

"Is it thus, that God, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, then I will be surely saved if I belong to their number. As soon as my time arrives, God will work in me through the Spirit of Christ. But does God not know me in His love, then is all in vain that I might do. I leave it thus to God, and continue in my ways." This is the opinion of many who carelessly and insensibly misuse the doctrine of predestination. In the following pages I hope, under God's blessing, to convince the impartial and reflecting reader, that this abuse of the doctrine is *groundless* and *condemnable.*

*Firstly. If your reasoning had any basis, then you ought to act in the same manner in regard to your timely interests, as you conclude from the decree of God, to be obliged to do in regard to your eternal salvation.*

In God there is in truth but one decree, which embraces all, and includes your lot in this world, as well as your future destiny. According to your reasoning, you may therefore continue in the same foolish strain: "Is it God's purpose that I shall prosper in this life, then it will surely come to pass. Has He concluded differently, then I will not be able to change it. I will therefore neglect the duties of my employ, live carelessly and comfortably on, and not trouble myself about my timely welfare." But do you act in this manner about your timely interests? or do you use,

on the contrary, all the *means* to secure, ameliorate, or to restore your prosperity, without thinking about the Divine decrees? Would you not call it foolishness in a man who acted otherwise? If the gardener would meditate in his field: "If it is God's purpose that my ground should bear fruit, then it will surely bear fruit, and it is therefore useless for me to do any thing towards it. I will therefore neither plough, nor manure, nor sow," would you not consign such a man to the mad-house? And why would you judge a man differently who acts in the same manner in regard to his eternal salvation?

*Secondly.* We must remember that *in God's eternal purpose means and ends are closely united.* It would be a false exposition of this doctrine to say that God has elected some to eternal life, *without* regard to their persevering in unbelief and sin. Far from it. Has He determined certain events or facts, He has determined with them the means by which they shall come to pass. If a sick person uses the prescribed medicines and recovers, then we perceive afterwards that it was God's purpose that he should recover, but at the same time, that he should recover *by the use of medicines.* It is exactly the same in regard to our salvation. Whom God has elected for the blessedness of heaven, He has at the same time elected to be formed for that heaven by faith in Christ, conversion, and sanctification. Without those means nobody will go to heaven, and it is, therefore, our first duty to seek with the most earnest care to walk and to proceed in that road which leadeth to eternal life.

*Thirdly. Nothing is more rational than to direct ourselves, not according to what is unknown and hid from us, but according to that which we know and which has been plainly revealed by the word of God.* Deut. xxix. 29. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

What is more unknown to us, than God's purpose, in regard to ourselves? And how then can such a Divine purpose become the basis of our actions? On the other hand, we know positively from His Holy Bible, which, according to His commandment, must be our only guide through life, that "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" that He has sent His Son into the world, as a Saviour of sinners, whose merits are all-sufficient for the whole world, and that "whosoever believeth in Him," and, therefore, *we also*, if we believe in Him, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This we know with perfect certainty, and we are entreated, *in the name of God*, and under promise of the help of His Holy Spirit, to embrace that faith, and seek reconciliation with God. Must you not call it foolishness to disregard these words, and to direct yourselves according to a *secret purpose* of God?

A general, who commands an army, has made his plan and gives his orders. What is now the duty of his officers and soldiers? What will have to direct them? That *plan* which is *unknown* to them, or the

*orders* which they have received in plain terms? Undoubtedly the last. With the secret plan of their general they have nothing to do. They have only to follow his commandments. And their conduct would be foolish and condemnable if, because they were in uncertainty about their general's *plan*, they despised his *orders* and laid down arms.

The apostles have, therefore, never used this doctrine of the Divine decrees, in the exposition of the gospel; but only in their addresses to Christian believers, in order to show them the infinite love with which God had loved them, as the unchangeable ground of their salvation, and, therefore, a source of their consolation and joy.

*Fourthly.* The eternity of God's purpose must never be a reason for our proceeding carelessly in the ways of sin, because it belongs to *the depths of God, which we mortal men cannot comprehend;* and of which, however pure and consistent with revelation our ideas may be on this point, we can form but inadequate ideas on account of our finite and limited understanding. You can conceive that God made a plan before, many and many centuries. However, God exists from eternity—without continuation of time. In eternity there is no difference of moments. God's planning is, therefore, not separated from His execution. From eternity unto eternity, He is the same planning and executing God. Comprehend this if you are able. None of us can. It confounds us if we try to contemplate these depths. But then it follows, that you cannot reason about something

which it is impossible for you to comprehend, and that in order to allow yourself to proceed your way in careless indifference.

*Lastly.* As sure as God's counsel shall endure forever, just as sure is it that *men are free acting beings, who are responsible for their deeds, who will not be lost but by their own fault.* This we learn, not only from Holy Scripture, but from our own conscience. We may find difficulties in bringing together this liberty of man, with the eternal plan of God; but in that case, we must remember that there are often two truths, both equally certain, but whose *apparent* contradiction we are not able to solve, on account of our limited faculties; for instance, this free-agency of man, and the co-working of Divine Providence in our acts—two truths, which no enlightened philosopher can deny. Is it thus certain that God's purpose shall prevail, and that He acts according to His good pleasure; it is, on the other hand, equally certain that we are free in our choice and will be called to render our account. Woe unto us, therefore, if under this pretext, we should harden our heart! *Depart from me, ye cursed!* would be the awful sentence, which we, trembling, should hear from our righteous Judge, and our conscience would respond to it, *justly, justly!*

### Section XIV.

#### Mis-use of the doctrine of man's inability.

"I confess," says Phineas, "that I am an unconverted man, but how can I help it? Man is unable to do any good. God must convert us to life. I must

wait patiently till it shall please God to give me suddenly a new heart through His Spirit. It appears as if God would not give me that grace as yet. From myself I can expect nothing."

A number of people think like Phineas, at least they persuade themselves to think so; they extend their inability even to the use of the means of reading and hearing, and make it a pretext for their perseverance in sin.

I must remark that the doctrine of our inability *cannot* be a lawful excuse for our unbelief or impenitence; for in that case we could not be justly condemned for them on the Last Day, which however, will be surely the case. Moreover how do those same people think on their death-bed, who in their healthy days have adhered to this vain excuse? In that hour their excuses fall away. Their conscience awakens. They fear to appear before God. A proof that they are convinced of guilt and willful neglect, and that the excuse of inability does not hold out in the hour of death.

Many persons extend this doctrine much farther than the Bible does. The Bible teaches us, and our own experience also confirms it, that without the supernatural influence of the Spirit of God we are unable to exercise true faith in Christ, true piety and virtue, from sincere motives. But the Bible nowhere teaches that the rational man is unable to use the right means, as the reading of the word, the attending on public worship, etc.; which many however profess, although knowing better, with the sinful and

wicked design to quiet their conscience about their willful neglect.

But further, if the Bible only spoke of our inability and no more, if it assured us: "there is no possibility to attain true faith in Christ, to practice true virtue and piety," and said nothing more; then, unbelief and sin would have some excuse. The origin of all misunderstanding on this point is to be found herein, that men are apt to behold this Bible doctrine only from one side. Nothing is more necessary than to see it from all sides. And doing this we will see that it ought to produce quite a different effect from becoming a pretext for sin. For how is this doctrine represented in Holy Scripture?

*Firstly.* The Bible does not teach us only our inability, but adds, as in one breath, the remedy. It teaches us that the Spirit of faith and conversion is obtained by Jesus for sinners, unable in themselves, and that our Heavenly Father will impart that Spirit to every one who asketh Him, much more than earthly fathers will give good things to their children. The effect of such a doctrine must be, not that we live carelessly on, but that, *on the one hand* we mourn that inability, never trust in our own strength, but humbly acknowledge the necessity of the assistance of God's grace; and *on the other side* that we rejoice in such a remedy for our recovery, and, as God alone can help us, direct ourselves to Him with confession of our deep depravity, and with fervent prayer for the beneficial influence of His Spirit. The Saviour exhorts us: "Ask and it shall be given unto you,

seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

*Secondly.* The gospel teaches us that the Father imparts to the blind and powerless sinner, faith and every good gift by His Spirit *through means of the word.* It becomes therefore, our business to place ourselves under that word, to hear and to read it with attention and diligence, with prayer to God to accompany it with instruction of His Holy Spirit. The Saviour said therefore to his disciples: "Take heed how ye hear."

*Thirdly.* The gospel teaches us that men who faithfully employ the gifts, privileges, and talents, which God gives them, will receive more abundantly; whereas, they who *hide* the one talent they received, *in the earth*, and neglect their privileges and gifts, will be deprived even of them. "For unto every one that hath shall be given," says the Saviour, "and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath." Matt. xxv. 29. And how are *we* situated? We are not men left to themselves. How many privileges do we enjoy above the Heathen! Take the map of the world before you and pause and reflect, and behold how much God has done for us in preference to other countries of darkness and superstition, for the true knowledge of God and Jesus Christ! How much does God for us to bring us into the path to Heaven! Think of your Bible, think of the preaching of that Word of God, think of the exhortations and warnings in His name addressed to

you, think of the knowledge thereby obtained, of so many good impressions, convictions and advices of conscience, of encouragements to prayer and other holy exercises. And shall we now sit down and reason what we are able to do, or not to do! Will it not be much more advisable to consider *what we have received already*, and that we shall have to render an account of the improvement we have made of it? When the gospel then proclaims: "Ask and it shall be given unto you," "take heed how ye hear;" "Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden;" when your heart approves of it, considers it necessary, and we feel a willingness towards it, then we must not reason what we are able to do or not, but simply follow these divine precepts, looking up to Him who gave them, and try to make a profitable use of the talents we have already received.

And now I beseech all men who abuse this doctrine as an excuse for their carelessness, to compare themselves with these remarks, and to answer to themselves the following questions: Do I mourn over my inability? Do I seek for help with God? Do I seek this help in prayerful study of the gospel? Do I employ the talents, privileges, and gifts I have already received? O, when you shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, do you a moment suppose that you will be able to say: "*I am lost, not by own fault, but by Thine, by refusing me the power which was required for my salvation!*"

PART SECOND.—OF MEN WHO REPOSE ON ERRONEOUS GROUNDS, AND TAKE SOME WRONG WAY TO OBTAIN PEACE FOR THE SOUL, AND ETERNAL SALVATION.

### SECTION XV.

Men who trust in their own righteousness.

Titius is obliging, ready to help, generous. His enemies can testify to his readiness to forgive, the poor and needy to his benevolence and kindness. He is an example of temperance, chastity, and order. He attends regularly public worship, and partakes of the Lord's Supper. He reads every day his task in the Word of God. He engages in prayer at appointed hours. He is diligent in his affairs. He is a model as husband and father. He is a blessing to society; add to this a remarkable kindness of heart. He is a loving precept of meekness and compassion. What an agreeable man, this Titius! But, alas! the sources of his virtue are impure. In all his actions he is moved by a spirit of meritoriousness. All his good qualities and good works he brings in account with God, and considers them as the grounds whereby he can safely appear before Him. Being blind to his sins and faults, he considers his position secure. The Lord, he thinks, will do no injustice. He will not forget to reward me richly for the good I have done. Has he some faults or sins, which he cannot absolutely deny, he has therefore again his hours of devotion. His partaking of the Holy Supper has blotted out the little sins he had. In one word, he thinks, when I compare myself with so many others

in whom vice is visible in different forms, I cannot help rejoicing in the expectation of Heaven! Our blessed Saviour has drawn this character with Divine eloquence in the Parable of the *Pharisee and Publican*, Luke xviii. 9-14, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are."

In most of these men we may observe, that they seek their righteousness not so much in inward holiness, true love to God, to themselves, and their neighbor, in truly virtuous deeds, which are prescribed by the eternal and unchangeable laws of God; but principally in the practice of certain positive and outward duties, which, for a part, are instituted by man. Thus were the Pharisees in the time of Jesus' sojourn on earth. They paid tithes of mint, and anise, and cummin. They cleansed carefully the outside of the cup and of the platter. They fasted often; but omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. How many do we meet among Christians who, in the same manner, prefer the observance of certain institutions of men above the commandments of God! How many trust in their own righteousness, *not* because they love, honor, and obey God, *not* because of their gratitude towards Him, *not* on account of their self-denial and denial of the world, their temperance in all things, their truly benevolent deeds, (of which virtue, in truth, they possess not the first principles;) but *because their outward life is in some respects regulated in accordance with the commandments of God.* They pronounce, at certain times, their formal pray-

ers. They appear religious, go to church, partake of the Holy Supper, fast at certain times, give abundant alms. This is their virtue, the grounds of their confidence.

To this class of men we must also bring those who trust partly in their own righteousness, partly in their religious privileges. Of this character was the Apostle Paul, before his conversion. He had been "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless." All these things had been *gain to him.* He considered them sufficient grounds to rely on for eternal life. Men of such character we meet still too often. Look, for a moment, at the character of Christina.

She is a stranger in regard to the practice of true religion in the soul, and still she would be astonished if you could have the least doubt as to the safety of her state towards God. And what are the grounds on which she builds her hope of heaven? She lives in outward communion with the church, and interests herself in every thing that looks church-like. She was baptized in the Protestant church, and received, from her early childhood, a religious education. For a number of years she attended the Sunday School and Bible Class, and became at last a member of the church. She was the child of pious parents, who sent up many a prayer for her to God. All her family belonged to the church as long as she can remember.

She esteems the minister of the gospel. Whenever there is religious service, on Sunday or on week days, you are sure Christina will be there. Everybody knows her seat. Her attention in hearing is observed by all. For many years she has kept notes of every text which was preached in her church. At church, at the prayer meeting, in the Sunday school, she is *at home*. Do you meet her in company, you are sure to hear her speak about the different churches or their pastors. The family histories of every minister in the city she can give you in all its details. They call her all by her first name. She visits them often; does every thing for them; and feels a warm interest in her particular church. These things she makes the grounds of eternal happiness. Mixed up with every thing belonging to the visible church, she has commenced to suppose that it would be impossible for her to be excluded from the true children of the church, that she surely will go to heaven.

Before showing the causes of this malady, and the remedies to be applied, we will pause a moment at the necessity of getting cured of it.

It is hardly necessary to speak of the foolishness of building our hope of eternity on *outward religious privileges*. Pray, my dear reader, what merit is it to a man whether he is born from Christian parents, or from Greeks or heathens? Whether he is baptized or not? Whether his parents were pious, if he were not pious himself? Whether he can enjoy many means of grace or not? What does it prove to be an *Israelite*, without being *an Israelite in secret?* To be called a

*son of Abraham*, without following the obedience and faith of *Abraham?* and to say to *Jesus*, *Lord*, *Lord*, if we do not do the will of our Father who is in heaven?

Read here, with attention, Matt. vi. 21–23; Phil. iii. 4–10; and Romans ii. 28, 29.

In regard to trusting in our own righteousness through a proud imagination of our virtue, *if any thing hinders the practice of true Christianity, withholds its blessings, and exposes us to its threatenings, it is surely this kind of self-righteousness.* He who is ignorant of the sinfulness of his heart and conduct and is good in his own sight, is indisposed to bow himself down before God, moved by a sense of guiltiness, and exclaim, "Thou art righteous *when Thou speakest, and clear when Thou judgest.*" (Psalm li.) He is not disposed to estimate aright the salvation through Jesus Christ, to accept the offers of God's grace, and to seek life in Jesus. He is not disposed to behold the riches of God's lovingkindness, and to adore them in the work of salvation, so that his soul might be constrained by it to love God and His service. He cannot strive against his sins, which he does not know. Can he practice a virtue whose greatest beauty is humility, if his heart be filled with vanity? Can he accomplish his duty, depending on God, if he has no idea of his depravity and weakness? And if, by this self-righteousness, we are led far away from the true path, as indicated by the gospel, we certainly cannot expect to participate in the blessed consequences of a salvation which we re-

ject, of a forgiving love which we deem unnecessary towards ourselves.

Remember and reflect on the saying of the Saviour, and let it be a warning voice unto you: "This man," the humble publican, "went down to his house justified, rather than the other:" Luke xviii. 14; and also the language of the Apostle Paul: "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Remember that by trusting in our own righteousness, we add the greatest sin to those we have already committed, that of rejecting the most glorious of God's works, even the work of salvation; which rejection awaits the most terrible consequences of God's holy wrath, in the day of judgment.

This vain imagination of our own virtue, this trusting in our own righteousness, is the more a malady of which it is highly necessary to be cured, because *it is in opposition to the true moral state of depraved and sinful men, as we are. There is no difference. All* (Jews and Gentiles,) *have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* The one may not have committed as heinous sins as his neighbor, others may have repented and returned to God, others again may have attained a high degree in Christian perfection; none, however, can declare, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from sin." Prov. xx. 9. The most holy men on earth have their faults, and will be willing to confess this. *The whole world* is *guilty before God.* Rom. iii. 1–31. How incompatible then, is this vain imagination of our own right-

eousness with our moral condition! Titius, you form great ideas of your own virtue, you suppose yourself thereby justified before God; but did you ever, in earnestness and sincerity, reflect on what you are, and what you have done? Allow me to address you a few questions. I will not in the least, diminish the outward piety of your conduct in words and deeds, although a close examination would discover many transgressions and short-comings; but I will only address you in regard to the state of your heart. Can you declare, upon conscience, that in your heart always dwell those feelings and intentions which you ought to foster? Are you always filled with sentiments of love, reverence, and gratitude to God, of confidence and submission towards Him; with holy desire to know, to obey, and to glorify Him? Are you always possessed of that desire for true perfection and happiness; that care, not only for your mortal body, but for your immortal soul, that love towards your fellow-men, that interest in their eternal welfare, that meekness, that willingness, that readiness to forgive, that great object of living for the well-being of others, which may be required from you? Are you free from all evil, vain, and foolish thoughts? From distrusting thoughts in regard to God? From God-dishonoring ideas? From unkindly judging your fellow-men? Is your imagination free from images which disturb the passions, from cherished representations of grandeur, luxury, and honor, sensual pleasure, gain, and riches? Are your desires after worldly good and pleasure, always regular? Are

you always ready to do good, disposed to prayer, longing after God? Always sensible of His greatness and love? Never unwilling to show Him perfect obedience? Never opposed to the ways of His providence? Your are satisfied with your pious conduct, but by searching yourself, must you not declare that your noblest acts are stained with wrong sentiments or objects? Is your heart always interested in your outward religious actions? Can you declare that your good works come forth from a pure source, love to God; from the motive "God commanded this," and with the sincere object, to give Him a proof of your gratitude, and to promote His glory, and the happiness of yourself, or your fellow-men? O Titius, can you descend with these questions, into the hidden corners of your heart, without discovering numberless sins, without being overwhelmed by their multitude? And if we are thus situated, is it then not foolish and absurd to presume, that we can bring our good qualities and works, which are so imperfect as stained by sin, in account with God, in order to build on them our eternal salvation? And is any thing more rational, than to give up all idea of self-righteousness, and to come to the confession to which God will lead us: "I am guilty before God." "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight, shall no man living be justified."

And do you desire Titius to be cured of this malady, let us look then a moment at its different causes, each of which will show us a proper remedy.

*A first cause is the want of self-knowledge.* Men

who are self-righteous, are truly ignorant of their sinful and depraved state. They have no ideas of the extent and spirituality of the Divine laws, and being without this guide, they cannot possess a true sense of the multitude of their sins. They dislike to regard and search themselves closely. Filled with self-love and pride, they overrate their good works and endeavor to diminish their faults. The subtility of our heart tries to deceive us, if we want to behold its true state. How artfully do we mask, to deceive ourselves, and to hide the secret corners of our hearts! How ingeniously do we defend our faults with the most plausible arguments! Is it astonishing, then, that men who allow themselves to be governed by this depravity, remain ignorant of their sins and trust in their own righteousness?

*The first remedy*, therefore, will be: *Know your sins.* Seek after a correct knowledge of what God commands and forbids in His law. Compare yourself, the estate of your heart, your words and deeds, with what that law requires, by earnestly asking yourselves, in how far they correspond with it? Be on your guard in this examination, against pride and self-deceit. Judge impartially. In judging the faults of others, you can never use too much kindness; in judging your own, you can never be too severe. Endeavor also, to benefit by the judgments formed of you, by the members of your family, by the public, by your enemies, and investigate earnestly how far they are correct. Above all, as we are in need of the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, whose

work it is to convince of sin; let it be often your prayer to God, to show you by His Spirit, the multitude of your sins in their true character.

A *second cause* of the malady of such men, is that *they have no proper views of the enormity of the evil of sin.* The sins which they may discover, are regarded by them as "of little consequence." As a second remedy, I, therefore, say: *Strive after proper views of the enormity of sin.* Why is sin such a great evil? Because it is rebellion against God and His government, against the God of Heaven and earth, our Creator, Lord and Sovereign, to whom the strictest obedience is due; because we rebel, notwithstanding the justice and kindness of His laws, which have no other object than our happiness, notwithstanding His being our greatest benefactor, to whom we owe all that we are, all that we ever enjoy! Regard sin in this light. Behold thus your own sins. Do not lose sight of the aggravating circumstances of your transgressions. Know what you have done.

And do you wish to receive strong impressions of the evil of sin, behold then, Titius, the suffering Jesus. The Cross on Golgotha, on which the Son of God must die, rather than that sin should remain unpunished, preaches to us in a loud voice how great an evil sin must be in the sight of God.

A *third* cause, why so many men adhere to thus trusting in their own righteousness, is undoubtedly this, that *they are prejudiced against the doctrine of justification by faith, as declared by the Gospel.* The Gospel teaches that God forgives sin, for Christ's

sake, freely, by grace; and that whosoever believeth, or embraces the salvation through Christ with a humble faith, participates in that salvation by faith; without connecting with this doctrine, the necessity of good works. To this man is opposed. Not only are men too proud to humble themselves, to be saved by grace on account of the merits of a crucified Saviour, but they are prejudiced against this doctrine, because they do not understand it. They suppose that it destroys the power of the moral law; that according to this doctrine, it remains no longer our duty and becomes unnecessary to obey this moral law; and that this doctrine opens, therefore, the gate for vice and immorality. This causes them to cling the more to an opposite opinion, which makes human virtue the meritorious ground, as they suppose, of their justification before God.

The *third remedy* will be: *Rid yourself of your prejudices against the doctrine of justification by faith.* For this doctrine not only diminishes not the necessity and dutifulness of obedience to the moral law, but on the contrary it maintains the interests of true virtue and piety, it favors and promotes the practice of the Divine law. We will see this in the following section, to which I refer my readers, with the friendly request to read that part with particular attention, in order to be convinced of the necessity of practising holiness and virtue, notwithstanding the doctrine of justification by faith.

### Section XVI.

Men, who make Christ a servant of sin.

Arius is the opposite of Titius, whom we described in the foregoing section. Far from being righteous in himself, no doctrine pleases him better than that, "no flesh shall be justified by the deeds of the law," that on the contrary man must "be justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Thus far Arius is perfectly right. But, alas, how false are the conclusions which he draws from these true sayings. "If the law," says he, "cannot justify us before God, then we have also nothing more to do with it. We are not longer bound to obey it. If our good works cannot obtain the forgiveness of our sins, then they are unnecessary. To hold fast to them is only the residue of a self-righteous law-abiding spirit, and of ignorance of the secret of the gospel. The great point is this: to confess sin, and to seek forgiveness in the blood of Christ. Whether we strive against our sins or not this will be of little consequence. Unbelief alone is alarmed on this point. Sufficient is it to behold ourselves in Jesus. We all remain sinners, but the converted man beholds his sins, and finds in Christ a hiding-place."

This is Arius's opinion, and he follows it in his conduct. With the doctrine of sanctification he has nothing to do. He finds no difficulties in going along with the world, in following his desires and lusts, in hating others and showing his hatred, in acting un-

generously towards his fellow-men, in neglecting his affairs and his children, in taking vengeance on his enemies; or, in one word, in acting altogether contrary to the example and commandments of our Lord and Saviour. Does his conscience accuse him, he soon finds some means to silence it. He persuades himself that he looks on Christ. "In Him," he says, "I am not only justified but also sanctified;" and if his conscience be not satisfied with such an excuse, then he calls its warning voice, "the strivings of unbelief." O, what miserable, demoralizing, soul-destroying ideas! O that the gospel doctrine might never be thus abused by those who do not understand it aright; O that we might never hear such expressions used in regard to the moral recovery and sanctification of corrupt and sinful man, to which such ideas so easily lead! It is to you, who live under such wrong impressions, that I will now address myself.

The *first cause* of your malady may be found in *wrong ideas about misery and salvation.* What do you understand by misery? Only the punishment of sin. And what in your opinion is salvation? Nothing else but to receive forgiveness of sin. This is the only reason why you care to escape the punishment and obtain remission of your sins, without troubling yourself about holiness of heart and conversation. Herein consists your error; for misery and salvation include much more. The misery into which we have fallen by separating ourselves from God, does not consist in the *punishment* only; but also in the

*power* and dominion of sin over us; and to be saved does not express, in regard to us, to receive forgiveness only; but also to be saved from the dominion of sin and to be sanctified. For true happiness consists in the assurance of God's favor *and* in conformity to his image. In *God's favor*, because God is all-sufficient to render us happy—in *conformity to Him*, because it is a conformity to the most glorious, and therefore most happy Being. Holiness is happiness, is salvation. Every transgression is a deduction on the amount of our enjoyment. Holiness will be the blessedness of Heaven!

A *second cause* is *the erroneous conception of the nature and true object of salvation.* Many behold the work of salvation as simply consisting herein: that Christ fulfilled the law and died on the cross as the propitiation for sin, without regarding Him as their teacher, example, Lord and king. They possess not the faintest idea of the holy object of salvation. Moreover, their attention is only directed to what the Son of God has done for the salvation of sinners, and it escapes their attention what in the great work of salvation is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Is it therefore to be wondered at that they seek to console themselves with what Christ has done *for* us, without thinking of what has to be wrought *in* us! The Gospel teaches us quite differently. The Son of God came to this world not only to reconcile the world unto God by his obedience in sufferings and death, but also to relieve us, fallen men, from the depth of moral depravity unto conformity to God, and to

become therefore their teacher, model, Lord, and king. Moreover, as the gospel-doctrine of grace speaks of the love of God and salvation through His Son, so it speaks not less of the work of regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. And the whole and great object of salvation is no other than that sinful men, should not longer live unto sin, but become holy as God is holy, which not only follows from the holiness of God and Jesus, but may be proven by a multitude of places of Scripture, as Ps. cxxx. 4; Eph. i. 4; Tit. ii. 14; 1 Pet. ii. 24; 1 John iii. 5. 8; and others.

The abuse of the grace of God for an unholy life, originates, *thirdly, by drawing false conclusions from the doctrine of justification by faith.* "Can the law not justify us, say some, then we do not want it at all. We are not longer bound to obey it." This conclusion is false. "I have become so depraved that I cannot obey God's law so completely as to be justified by it, *therefore* it is not longer my duty to obey it at all!" How is this? Am I relieved from my duties, because I cannot attain a certain object by it? It is impossible that our obligation to obey God in His moral laws ever should cease; because God remains forever our Creator, Lord, and benefactor, whose moral laws are not arbitrary commandments, but are based on grounds of right and justice, which, throughout all ages, will remain the same. No, our obligation to obedience becomes but the greater, by the gracious forgiveness of our sins for Jesus' sake. Or, is the child not under stronger ob-

ligations to obey his father, when he has freely been forgiven much? Must not the love of Christ, who died on a cross for sinners, and who requires that we prove our gratitude by keeping His commandments—must not the infinite grace of God, through which He forgives the sins of whosoever believeth in Christ, and accepts of the way of salvation in Him—must not this love of Christ, and this grace of God, constrain us the more not to live any longer to ourselves, but to the glory of God and the Saviour? And how is it, then, possible to presume that the love of God in forgiving our sins for Jesus' sake, would do away with our obligation to obey Him according to His commandments; whereas, the discourses of Jesus and the epistles of the apostles contain so many lessons and warnings, which are strongly enforced by the joyful tidings and benefits of salvation? Or what else can we say, in reading, for instance, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ;" "Be ye, therefore, followers of God, as dear children?" &c. See chap. v. to the Ephesians; chap. iii. to the Colossians, &c.

"If our good works have no merit with God, *then* they are not necessary. The righteousness of Christ is sufficient to us." Thus think many. No doubt the righteousness of Christ is sufficient for *our justification*, but we need more than justification to enjoy happiness. *We must become fit and disposed for the enjoyment of salvation, and this is obtained by the way of sanctification.* There are certain enjoyments and profits attached to the practice of God's com-

mandments, which cannot be separated from them, so that those who obey must say, "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than gold or silver—yea, sweeter than honey—thy testimonies are the rejoicing of my heart." A great part of the happiness of Heaven will consist in more extended knowledge and perfect holiness. But now, pray tell me, how can a man who perseveres until the end in his sinful and ungrateful life, without returning to God, and living to His glory, how can he enjoy the happiness which is attached already here on earth to the service of God? How can he be fitted for the enjoyment of a holy Heaven? Heaven would not suit him. His unrenewed nature would not be more able to enjoy the blessedness of Heaven, than the blind man to admire the beauties of nature in the midst of a paradise. The Bible is positive on this point: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. "Every man that hath this hope (see 1 John, iii. 3) in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." And 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" &c. Some people go still further, and say: "To strive after holiness is injurious to evangelical opinions and sentiments, as it supposes a law-abiding spirit, and produces pride and arrogance." They who speak thus, confound things which are entirely distinct. To be diligent in the fulfilling of our duties, trusting in our own imaginary strength, and with the object to establish our own righteousness before God, supposes a law-abiding spirit, and would render us proud and

high-minded. But altogether different is it with that diligence in holiness and virtue which, under humble dependence on God, originates from faith in Christ, and is kindled by a sense of obligation and gratitude, and by the conviction that true enjoyment can be found only in a pious life on earth, and true happiness consists only in perfect holiness in Heaven. This is evangelical, this is the gospel. True faith is represented everywhere, in the Bible, as producing these effects. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Jam. ii. 26. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John xv. 8. "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John ii. 4. See Acts xv. 9; 1 Tim. i. 5.

Instead of intending the neglect of virtue and piety, the doctrine of justification by faith, on the contrary, *promotes* the correct observance of the moral law. For it makes us observe the law from the *purest* principle; not the principle of meritoriousness, and claiming reward, but of love and gratitude. It shows us the most powerful motives in the infinite riches of God's grace, and the unsearchable love of Christ. That doctrine, lastly, inspires us with that courage and gladness of heart which are necessary to remain steadfast in the practice of virtue, and that boldness to approach the throne of God, notwithstanding our sense of unworthiness, with the prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit, which

we need, and which God will grant us, for the observance of the Divine law.

A *fourth cause* of the malady of which we are speaking, is, *the abuse of divers other doctrines of the gospel.* Of these I will only name a few.

Some say: "Jesus Christ came into the world, to save *sinners.*" Most positively true, but not to *leave them sinners. To save sinners,* includes to save them *from sin* itself. "But," they continue, "according to the Bible, believers remain sinners. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' 1 John i. 8." This is true, in so far, that even believers daily *offend in many things,* and will have to war against their indwelling sin and depravity, until the hour of death. However, the believer differs widely from the unbelieving, unconverted man, as having obtained a principle of new life within him, by which he strives against sin and lives towards God. See the 8th chapter of Romans.

Some bring forward also, the examples of the saints in the Bible, as Noah, Lot, Abraham, Moses, Samson, David, Solomon, Peter. But here we must not forget that the history of their faults was not written for our imitation, but to warn us; that we must not be too quick, in allowing to great men, as for instance, Samson, whom God used in the ways of Providence for great purposes, a rank among the saints; that we must consider the time when they lived, and that the truly pious men of the Bible, who have committed some great sin, have also given the most decided proofs of true repentance and change of life, as for

instance, a David and a Peter. Psalm li.; Psalm cix. 4, 5; Gen. vi. 9; Rom. vii. 22.

*Lastly*, some say: "This world is the place of depravity and sin. Here the great point is *faith*. *Holiness* is reserved for heaven." But this is true, only of *perfect* holiness. To that holiness, the grounds are laid on earth. Here is the time of preparation, trial, purifying, practice, strife. How would it be otherwise, for some duties for which there will be no occasion in heaven, as repentance, submission, chastity, temperance, benevolence, readiness to forgive? Saving grace, therefore, teaches us "to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus ii. 11, 12.

From what we have said, it naturally follows, that the remedies and preservatives against this malady, are the following:

1. Endeavor to obtain correct ideas of salvation and misery.

2. Strive after a correct knowledge of the work of salvation.

3. Be on your guard, against drawing erroneous conclusions from the doctrine of justification by faith; or,

4. To mis-use some other Bible doctrine, that apparently would allow us to continue in sin.

And if I should have met with some one who thus far has mis-used the doctrine of grace to contiuue in an unholy life, may these pages have shown him the unreasonableness and danger of his opinions and behavior. May he have found out the great neces-

sity of getting cured of this malady and become desirous, and apply the means for his recovery. May he impress deep upon his soul, that misery includes dominion of sin, and salvation conformity to God; that salvation has the most holy object, and consists not only in remission of punishment, but also in renewing of our depraved moral nature; and that the doctrine of justification by faith, instead of favoring sin, promotes in a powerful manner the cause of holiness and virtue!

### Section XVII.

#### Men who serve God and the world.

By this, I do not allude to men of true piety and virtue, who *use this world as not abusing it*, who are diligent in their temporal affairs, and conform themselves with discretion, to the indifferent customs of society; who moderately participate in the innocent enjoyments of life, and indulge in such recreations as are sinless in themselves, compatible with the earnestness of religion, and harmless to virtue; for all this can go hand in hand with true Christian piety. 1 Cor. vii. 31; 1 Tim. iv. 4; Eccl. ix. 7, 8. But I allude to such persons, as appear to be much for religion, who practice many outward religious duties, that come not in contact with their sinful desires, and meanwhile seek their greatest happiness in what the world gives, its good, honor, and pleasures; who immoderately use its advantages and innocent pleasures with a wrong object, and who make no difference between innocent or sinful enjoyment; I allude

to persons who are willing to obey God, where it is convenient to them, but who make exceptions and conditions in their obedience to God, in regard to such sinful pleasures, desires, and lusts, which they love most, and which they could not forsake without difficulty and sacrifice; persons therefore, who wish *to serve two masters*, who bow themselves before *God and mammon*. Chryses holds such opinions, and shows this in his equivocal and contradictory mode of life. He will obey God, as long as it does not interfere much with his most predominating desires, or the fashion of the world, or as long as it does not require any real sacrifice. But when it is necessary to forsake some sin, which he loves; some habit to which he is enslaved; when he must sacrifice something which is dear to him; when he must bear something which appears heavy; in that case, he follows his own will. He goes regularly to Church, and to the theatre. In the morning he reads his Bible, in the evening he plays his game of whist. He has his hours of devotion, and his hours of jolly amusement. He is precise in some duties, but gives way to unkindness, passion, vengeance, and other trespasses, as if they were no sins. One time, he pleads the cause of religion, at another time, he finds no difficulty in affirming his sayings with an oath. With the pious, he is pious, with the worldly, he is worldly. Chryses is double-minded, and unsteady in his ways.

Lucia is a lady who cannot choose between God and the world, and who intends to serve them both. She reads good books, she is a friend of public wor-

ship, and this not only from mere habit, but from religious feelings. She likes to speak on religious subjects, and still follows in all such persons whose hope and happiness is limited to this world. She participates in all kinds of worldly pleasures, without making any distinction between the innocent and the sinful. She seeks conversation with the pious without forsaking unprofitable and dangerous company. She loves to seek for invisible and heavenly goods, and still follows every new fashion the moment it appears. Her toilet is not only gaudy, but shows in its constant variety how her heart is taken in by the god of fashion. And still she is perfectly at rest, trusting in her inclinations towards religion, and provided with pretexts to defend her conformity to the world.

The *first cause* of this malady is *the want of a proper sense of the vanity and instability of this world, as well as of the truth that our only and real happiness can be found but in God.* Such persons have too much religious feeling to be altogether indifferent about God, His favor and service; and still too faint impressions of it to render themselves wholly to Him. They know too much of the vanity and instability of the world to depend on it entirely for their peace and comfort, but they are too indifferent about it to come to the decided step, and renounce all that is in opposition to conscience. They therefore try to compromise, and adopt some plan by which to obtain rest for the soul, without ceasing to gratify their love of the world.

*Secondly. They want that proper knowledge of themselves, and of their true position towards God,* which inspires us with an earnest care for the salvation of our sinful souls, and fills us with disgust for the vanities of this world. A *third cause* is *the want of knowledge of true Christianity.* They do not know what the gospel means by "a true Christian." They follow a liberal morality, and think light of many duties. Thus they admit much which is positively against the commandments of Jesus. And this is the worse in them, because their sensuality loves to cherish *such liberal ideas* about good or evil, and because they conform themselves, in using the world, more to *the opinions and examples of others* than to *the Word of God.*

Chryses, this is your malady, and these are its causes. In order to make you feel the necessity of getting cured of it, I will try to convince you of this positive truth: *It is impossible to serve God and the world.* We are not Christians by openly professing it, by abstaining from the most vulgar sins, and by performing some few good deeds, which any kind-hearted man would perform without regard to religion. No, according to the gospel, we must acknowledge in God our *highest good* in Christ Jesus; we must value it as such and seek it by humble faith in Christ, and true conversion to God. We must render and submit ourselves unconditionally to God and Jesus, so that we are not only obedient in such duties as agree with our mutual dispositions and are therefore easily accomplished; but also in those

which are opposed to our sinful desires and lusts. Denial is the first law in Christianity. If we want to be disciples of Jesus, we must not longer be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind; we have to put off the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and to put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness; we have to deny ourselves, to take our cross, and follow after Jesus; we must have no object in the world which we esteem higher than Him, so that *he that loveth father or mother more than Him, is not worthy of Him.* See Rom. xii.; Eph. v.; Matt. x. And now judge for yourself, Chryses, whether it is possible, according to the gospel, to serve God, and at the same time to serve the world? Or is it not contradictory that we should choose God and Jesus in preference to any thing else, and at the same time value nothing higher than the things of this world? Not contradictory, to render yourself unconditionally to the Lord, who positively commands, "deny yourself and deny the world," and still to follow that world as if you were *one of them?* "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matt. vi. 24. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. "For what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light

with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.

And therefore, Chryses, you have to choose. You must come to a decision. I may address you with the words of Joshua, (and please read that part of history, in the last chapter of Joshua,) "Choose you this day whom ye will serve;" or use the words of Elijah, (1 Kings xviii. 21,) "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And would you not conclude to follow "the Lord?" The man who adjusts Christianity after his sensual dispositions, is really the most unhappy being among men. He stands on the division-line of sin and the service of God. He cannot determine wholly for either of them. He therefore does not enjoy the imaginary pleasure of sin in peace, nor does he know the true enjoyments of the Christian. And he belongs, therefore, to the unhappy mortals who flatter themselves with heaven, but to whom the Judge of the world will speak the terrible words: *Depart from me, I never knew you.*

Perhaps you think it very painful to say farewell to the world, but believe then that it is only prejudice which makes you think so. The innocent pleasures, as we have seen already, you have not to leave off,—and the sinful! O be assured that their prohibition is one of the greatest proofs of Divine love, wisdom and faithfulness. Jesus does not ask so much strife against our passions, so much sacrifice and denial, to deprive us of any enjoyment, but because without these sacrifices, it would be impossible for us to obtain

true happiness. Why, for instance, does He wish us to forsake some pleasures and habits which the world follows? Because they are dangerous, and opposed to the dignity of our nature, injurious to our progress in holiness, and exciting to the passions. Because they render our warfare but the more difficult, and destroy in part or wholly, what the means of grace, under the blessing of God, had built. Jesus requires that we render ourselves unconditionally to Him, because He knows perfectly well what we must do, or leave off for our happiness. Has this exposition made any impression upon you, then use the following remedies for your recovery.

*First.* Seek after a deeper sense of the vanity and instability of the world, and of the great happiness which is found in God, and in His holy service.

*Secondly.* Strive, by meditation and prayer, after a proper knowledge of yourself, your sins, your misery and danger. The consideration of these things, impressed upon our souls by Divine grace, render man too earnestly minded, too careful for the salvation of his soul, to participate in all the vain pleasures of the world.

*Thirdly.* Endeavor to obtain more and more a right conception of the true nature of Christianity, and of the narrow path in which the Christian has to walk onward. Think about this *according to the Gospel.* Hold on to it, and do not direct yourself, in opinion or conduct, after the ideas or examples of others, nor follow such things, for the lawfulness of which you could find but some visionary defence.

*Fourthly.* Be on your guard not to judge lightly *what is, or what is not lawful* to a Christian, in regard to the world. Is your heart so much attached to the world, that you would forbid but little—beware—let your mind predominate over your heart. Rather come with that heart, as it is, to Jesus, "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present world." He is the person to work in us that willingness to forsake the world, for which sinful men are unable in themselves.

And *lastly*, Have you chosen "to serve God," be not afraid to show it to others, that you have learned to think and act differently. By declaring yourself manly upon this point, you will free yourself from many invitations and temptations to which you would be otherwise exposed. Do they laugh or scorn at you for this reason, remember then that their conduct honors neither their mind nor their heart, and that the approbation of the high and glorious God, is infinitely more valuable than the applause of the whole world.

### Section XVIII.

The apparently religious man, but in reality an enemy of heartfelt religion.

Erastus is far from building his hopes for eternity, on any of the false grounds we have heretofore named. On the contrary, he defends the great Gospel doctrine, that men must be saved by free grace through faith in Christ, and also, that we must show our faith by good works, as the tree is known by its

fruits. The outward conduct of Erastus corresponds with these correct ideas. He attends public worship and the celebration of the Lord's Supper, as regularly as can be expected of the most pious man. He is just, benevolent, diligent, orderly, decent, and all this, not from an idea of meritoriousness, but because he will show his faith by his works.

However, this same Erastus, this champion of faith and virtue, has much to say against all people, whose piety not only dwells in their mind, but also in their heart. He gives them all kinds of nicknames. In his ideas they are either mopish, melancholy souls, or stupid simpletons of little education and learning; pharisees and deceivers, who mislead and condemn others, or idlers, who neglect their business, in order to attend all their prayer-meetings. He metes out their faults or sins, in all their length and breadth; and drawing, against all rules of sound arithmetic, general conclusions from single cases, he is rich in stories, to show that good and simple people have been cheated by those "pietists." No words, in regard to religion, he hates more than *experience*, and *evidence*. "All this," he says, "is hypocrisy and fanaticism. Deeds, deeds, that is the great point by which we must prove our faith. Show me thy works!"

Erastus contents himself with a *historical faith* and an *outward* reform of conduct; but religion, as it exercises an influence on the feelings, sentiments and affections, of the soul; religion, which we call spiritual religion, he hates and despises. He confesses with his lips that he is a sinner, but to confess

it with all his soul, filled with shame, and under a deep sense of his unworthiness before God, this he calls puritanism. He doubts not a moment but he is a believer, because he believes everything belonging to the history of Jesus, to be as surely true as the revolutionary war. But to believe in Christ with influence on his heart; to expect all from Him, nothing from himself; to feel a living interest for himself in the work of salvation, to seek for wisdom, consolation, zeal and strength at the feet of Jesus; to render himself to Him; to accept the plan of God; to receive His blessings with joy and praise; in short, to experience those actions of the soul, which are produced by a true belief in the declarations of the gospel, these are things as unknown to Erastus, as the sound of music to the deaf. He is fully decided to show his faith by his works, but this is only limited to the cultivation of his outward conduct, for he utterly neglects, nay, never thinks of the state of his heart, which is such a great point in the spiritual law of Christianity. Thus contenting himself with superficial things, it is not astonishing that Erastus is generally well satisfied with himself; that he is ignorant of strife against sin, or troubles of the soul, and that he cannot suffer to hear of the complaints and troubles, nor of the religious scruples of others. "In one word," he says, "I will not go on mourning like an old woman, I am for a manly piety. And with all those scruples and all that repenting, I have nothing to do. My principle is to act right, and that will suffice."

This malady of Erastus, and every one like him, is

caused, *firstly*, by a *want of knowledge and of a feeling of their true necessities.* They do not understand how miserable they are as sinners, nor the insufficiency and transitoriness of the world. They do not feel that they are made for higher enjoyments, that God alone can satisfy their wants and desires; that communion with Him, His knowledge and service are necessary; in short, that they need God to fill the vacant space of their immortal souls. They are religious, not because they love religion as religion, but because they consider it is a necessary condition, to which we have to subscribe, in order to secure ourselves against eternal misery. This is the reason that they are satisfied with the outward form, and feel a kind of disgust for the religion of the soul, and for those who love it.

Nothing is therefore more necessary than that such persons seek for a true consciousness of their real wants, so that they may feel a desire for a religion for their heart, and we therefore recommend them the use of those remedies which we advised to the man of the world in the foregoing section.

A *second cause* of this malady we find in *erroneous notions which are secretly mixed up with correct ideas of the gospel.* They represent to themselves faith as a work of the mind, without considering the influence it must exercise on the heart; and sanctification, as consisting in outward reform, without giving any attention to its principal object, the purifying of the source from which their deeds originate, and to the necessity of being *changed by the renewing of their*

*heart.* They must be cured of these errors, and apply themselves to a right conception of faith and virtue, for which we refer them to Section IV.

But what makes Erastus and others so opposed to spiritual religion and its friends, is this, that they have no correct ideas about the meaning of *experimental religion*, by which they confound true with false evidences of grace, and judge all alike on account of the extravagant ideas of *some* persons in this respect.

When you hear of experimental religion or evidences of grace, Erastus, you call it fanaticism. Let me convince you to the contrary. But in order to do this, we must first come to a definition of what we have to understand by *evidence.* Do not suppose that we have to think here of visions, revelations, appearances, and audible voices, which, through the sickly imagination of the simple and superstitious, they have sometimes believed that they saw or heard. How we have to judge on this subject we will see after this, when we speak about fanaticism. But by this *evidence* we must understand, "the experience or perception, which pious men have, of the sentiments and affections of their heart, produced by a clear conception or enlightening of their mind concerning the most important truths;" further, "the experience or knowledge of the actions of their soul as the consequences of their knowledge of themselves, of their faults, and moral incapability, of their faith in Christ, and of their faith in God's forgiving, and sanctifying grace in Christ Jesus."

Nothing is more rational, more necessary than this

evidence. If I believe in truths, which regard my happiness, I cannot be so indifferent about them as to limit my faith to a cool conviction of the intellect; no, it will have an influence over the desires, inclinations, affections, and occupations of my soul. When I am in distress, and when I see that distress, it is natural that my position should render me uneasy and sad and desirous for help. If being in distress, I truly believe that there is somebody who can and who is willing to help me, I will feel relieved and rejoice, and I will speed to him to be helped. If I were to act differently, it would plainly prove that I did not believe.

The patient who has faith and confidence in his physician, will not satisfy himself by acknowledging him *able* to attend to him in his sickness, no, he will prove his confidence and faith by sending for him, by taking his advice, and using the remedies which he prescribes.

I have not the least doubt, Erastus, but thus far we agree; now let us apply this to the *evidences of grace* in believers, and I feel assured that you will be convinced that they are not only rational but highly necessary, and that without them no true conviction of the mind about interesting truths can be consistent.

Must we not learn to know ourselves? Does this not include the knowledge of our sins, our guiltiness, our depravity, and moral inability? The miserable state therefore in which we are plunged by sin? Must this knowledge not naturally bring forth sadness,

and accusing conscience, fear of punishment, alarming prospects? Can you call it then fanaticism, when a person who has heretofore lived carelessly, but has now come to a stand, and beholding his sinful and miserable state with alarm, mourns over his sins with all his heart, confesses them before God, fears for the justly deserved punishment, and becomes abased under the power of a loudly accusing conscience? When all this, until he is relieved by the consolations gospel, produces in him a sadness, which may be observed even by others?

Must we not believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the only all-sufficient, compassionate Saviour, who after having taught on earth, and having caused the washing away of our sins by His blood, is now sitting on the right hand of the majesty of God's throne? But if we truly thus believe in Him, should this not affect our heart, should this not constrain us to fly to Him for help? Could we thus believe in Jesus, without coming to Him with all our complaints, without accepting his doctrine and consulting it as the standard of our conduct and sentiments, without embracing his sacrifice for sin as the ground of our obtaining forgiveness, without adoring Him as our glorified mediator, without seeking at his feet light, zeal, strength, reformation, and consolation? And can you call it then fanaticism to experience such occupations in regard to our adorable Saviour in our own heart and secret life?

Must we not believe that God for Jesus' sake will completely forgive the sins of every one who returns

to Him through the Mediator, with confession of sins; and that a moral recovery of depraved sinners by the Holy Spirit is obtained for them and promised to them? Is this not a great truth which not only proves God's infinite love, but is of the greatest importance to sinful and depraved men? Is any thing more apt than this to fill the soul with love, gratitude, joy, and peace? And if then a person, who, sad and mourning by the sight of his guilt and depravity, obtains clear views of the consoling Gospel; if he embraces the declarations of God in regard to His forgiving and restoring grace; is it then fanaticism if he inwardly rejoices in the glad tidings of salvation, if he renders himself to God in Christ Jesus with the humble confidence of a child, if he weeps them tears of joy and gratitude, if he experiences affections of sincere love to God and Jesus, and the most ardent desire burning in his soul, to live henceforth wholly for God and the Saviour? Is it fanaticism to experience such affections and feelings of the soul and to speak of them?

No, Erastus, it is not. These are sentiments and affections of the heart which necessarily proceed from a true understanding of the most important truths; without them we have great reason to doubt the sincerity of our faith. Lay down your prejudices. See what you need. Be not longer satisfied with your cool speculations of the mind, with your outward reform in conduct. But let it become your earnest desire to be transformed by the renewing of your mind and seek for spiritual religion, religion of the soul!

THIRD PART.—OF MEN WHOSE RELIGIOUS CONVICTION STILL TAKES A WRONG DIRECTION.

## Section XIX.

Men who live under much conviction and religious impressions, but still remain what they are.

Men of this description possess a sensible and awakened conscience, and behold many things differently from what they did before. They are convinced of the insufficiency of the world, the guilt and misery of sin, the great value of the favor of God, the delight of His service, the unhappiness of the miserable state in which sin has brought them, the necessity of salvation and the blessedness of those in whom God has glorified the riches of His mercy and the power of his converting grace. Often they reflect earnestly and deeply on their own position. Often they are moved, particularly under touching sermons, or by religious conversation, in afflictions, at a deathbed or in painful losses. In those moments their hearts often experience a desire towards God and Jesus. Then they sometimes feel inclined to seek the Lord while he is to be found, to call upon Him while He is near. The work terminates in these convictions and intentions; as these impressions do not work through so as to bring them to a complete renunciation of sin and sincere return to God through Jesus Christ.

O might such persons learn to appreciate the *great necessity of fostering and following such blessed im-*

*pressions and intentions of returning to God!* For if they *neglect them, they, firstly, run a great risk of losing them at last entirely.* Our experience will affirm this. When by the preaching of God's word or by some circumstances of life we were brought to earnest reflection, and when, instead of fostering these reflections by meditation, prayer, or any other means, we neglected them, or tried to distract our thoughts, how soon were those profitable impressions gone! How soon our hearts became insensible, even more insensible often than they had been! This is in the nature of such religious impressions and the reason why we ought to take so much care in nourishing and kindling them.

*Secondly.* Such men ought to remember, that *if their covictions and impressions miss their proper effect, they really are unhappier than others who carelessly walk in the paths of sin.* They cannot enjoy the pleasures of the world without being hindered by the thoughts of death, and judgment, and eternity; and on the other hand, they are deprived of the true joys of the Christian. Their life becomes disagreeable. By their dubious position they do not relish the imaginary pleasures of sin, nor partake of the enjoyments of religion.

How much unhappier will they be in eternity! Or will our responsibility, and therefore our misery, not be the greater, in proportion as we have sinned against light and conviction?

Look, *thirdly, at the value of such impressions and convictions.* They *originate* from God, the Father

of lights, from whom all good and perfect gifts proceed, and who does not leave us to ourselves, but knocks at our hearts by His Holy Spirit.

Their *object* is to bring us back to God, and not only to awake in us the intention "to arise and go to our Heavenly Father," but instantly to do it. Such a determination is so glorious, that nothing is more deplorable than that we should give it up. And lastly, the joyful *consequence* of bringing such a plan into execution, so that the religious conviction produces its desired effect! O, what a different appearance everything assumes in the eyes of such people. Their spiritual condition becomes so joyful, so blessed, as we see it portrayed in the parable of the Prodigal Son, when he fell down before his father, with tears of repentance, when he lay on his father's bosom, and rejoiced again in his love, participated in the family happiness, and all rejoiced in his return. Do you ask me: How can I best kindle such impressions, and execute such intentions of returning to God? I then advise you, my friend, let it be your first thought, the moment they awake in your heart, to pray earnestly to God to prolong and to quicken them by the influence of His Spirit, so as to make you execute them. Without this they will soon vanish. 2. Meditate often on all that can strengthen your religious impressions and convictions. 3. Set daily some time apart for secret exercises. It is difficult to perceive how much we are aided by such retirement in cherishing received impressions. 4. Avoid all diversions which you can avoid, particu-

larly such conversation and pleasures as you know must be injurious to your heart. In *disregarding* this last advice lies the reason why so many amiable persons, who live under impressions of religion, a hundred times form good resolutions, but a hundred times lose them again, and remain in a state of uneasiness and indecision. 5. Make a diligent use of every occasion from which you may promise yourself some edification and confirmation of your good intentions. Among these I will only name intimate conversation with a tried Christian, who possesses not only piety but also wisdom, to whom you can go for advice under all circumstances, and for whom you can open your heart, your conduct, and complaints.

### Section XX.

#### Men, who trust in their religious sensibility and feelings.

To this class belong the sentimentally religious. Julia is very sensible of everything affecting in religion. Her eyes are filled with tears, by looking at a painting of the sufferings of the Saviour. She weeps under every touching sermon. In the open field, on the mountains, or in the garden, she is affected by all the proofs of God's power, wisdom, and love. At the sight of poverty, she appears all pity. However, it remains by these affections. They are not followed by deeds. She remains deprived of that true faith in Christ which purifieth the soul, and produces earnest piety; and although she possesses a heart, wherein the love of the world has taken its abode, and which follows the tone of the

world; she lives in the supposition, that it must be "well with her," because "she has so much feeling." She only *supposes* herself, without any earnest self-examination before God, to have a part in the riches of His heavenly kingdom. She speaks very frequently of her Heavenly Father; and because she loves to weep on the graves at a moonlight night, she thinks to be prepared for eternity, and rejoices in the expectation of meeting all her beloved dead in the realms of glory. To men who depend upon their religious affections, belong also those *that trust in their sensibility, without regarding its results on their heart and conversation in the world.* They consider themselves converted, and are at ease, because at times they have experienced some great distress of the soul, at other times, peculiar joy and consolation. Their easiness and comfort are greater, in proportion as these affections assume a more passionate form. They can describe how they became, not only conscious of their sins, but experienced the most terrible fear of hell, so that they beheld a dreadful gulf ready to swallow them up, or the horrible flames ready to devour them. Their joys were not less violent, and appeared to approach ecstacy. Often their affections attained such a height, that they produced a visible effect on their body, and not only showed themselves in tears, but in faintings and convulsive fits. In these high feelings, without looking to their cause or results, they suppose they have an infallible proof of being in a state of grace, and so they live carelessly on. Particularly if such passionate affec-

tions came over them, without any provocation, unexpectedly; or if consolation and joy were preceded in a somewhat regular order by the awakening and fears of conscience; and when they can relate all this with readiness and satisfaction, then there remains no longer any doubt but they have passed from death unto life.

The principal cause of their malady is, that they over estimate these affections, and miss an enlightened knowledge of what, besides affections, belongs to the state of a true Christian. And in order to assist them in forming a correct opinion, in regard to the value of religious feelings, I invite them to consider with me the following remarks.

*Firstly. Feeling, experience, vivid affections of the soul, belong most undoubtedly to true piety.* We have seen this already, in the case of Erastus, Section XVIII. to which I beg to refer.

*Secondly. This sensibility has in itself some value, and must be gratefully acknowledged before God.* It is a proof, that the heart is not hardened, and that God does not leave off to work in it. Moreover, these religious affections *may be* the evidence of the first work of conversion, if at least, they prove afterwards to exercise the proper influence on the state of the heart and conduct.

*Thirdly. Religious affections in themselves, are insufficient to be considered as positive evidence of true renewing of the heart by the Holy Spirit.* They are not sufficient, because to be a Christian, implies more than simply the experience of affections; but besides, they are insufficient proofs of conversion,

because the Bible, as well as experience, teaches us that religious emotions can attain a high degree, without proceeding from a renewed heart. How were the Israelites affected in Egypt, and at the Red Sea, by the miracles of Jehovah! How were they affected by the law-giving on Sinai! With what fervency and zeal did they promise: *all the words which the Lord hath said, we will do!* And still how soon did they forsake the Lord, and worship the golden calf! What feelings of fear, and shame, and grief, over their sins, filled the hearts of a Cain, a Pharoah, a Saul, an Ahab, and a Judas! The Saviour assures us that there are men who receive the word with joy, but are offended as soon as tribulations or persecution arise, for the Word's sake.

And does not experience teach us the same? Do we not meet from time to time with persons, who notwithstanding their religious feelings, remain absolutely the same persons in their manner of life that they had been before? How many, who experienced all those vehement feelings of fear and terror, and afterwards of exceeding joy, in whom those affections were really visible in their body, who could speak of them with fervor, with feeling and peculiar readiness; and who, notwithstanding all this, afterwards gave the most decided proofs of an unrenewed heart, and who returned to the ways of sin, with unlimited indulgence! Their conversion was like *a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

*Fourthly. Religious affections of the soul, prove to be of the right stamp, only when they originate*

*from an enlightened understanding of godly things, and produce return to and communion with God.* In judging the same, we have only to ask: *By what are they produced? What is their effect?* All religious affections not originating in knowledge, and in an enlightened understanding, are nothing more than heat without light. All holy affections of the heart are ascribed in the Bible, to knowledge. *Every one that loveth, is born of God and knoweth God.* 1 John iv. 7; Romans x. 2; John iv. 10; Psalms xliii. 3. Moreover, we must remember that they should originate in an enlightened understanding of godly things, *as they are revealed by the gospel.* By representing God only as just, or only as good, and not, according to the gospel, as gracious in Christ Jesus, our affections may be wrongly directed.

But above all, TRUE religious affections produce *return to God.* This is the great object of them. Man separated from God, his highest good, lives in sin without communion with Him; and this is the cause of his misery. If he would be happy himself, and honor his Creator, he must return to God, be re-established in His communion, formed for His service, and become a partaker of the Divine nature. As long, therefore, as religious affections do not have this effect, as long as they do not withdraw the sinner from sin; not truly bring him to God, we cannot consider them as sufficient evidences of true grace. It is, therefore, that a pious life is named throughout the Bible, and particularly in the epistles of John and James, as the genuine evidence of a renewed spirit.

This made the great difference in the religious feelings of Cain and David, of Judas and Peter. And to illustrate this with a few examples, let us look a moment at Caius, Seius and Titius, in their sorrow over their sins, and in their religious joy. All feel alarmed and sorrowful for their sins, but the causes and consequences of their affections are widely different. Caius is sad, abased and afraid, but knows hardly the reason why. The sorrow of Seius originates in knowledge of God; but of God only as just, and not as gracious in Jesus, and the highest good of man. His sorrow is, therefore, rather inquietude of conscience than true penitence; and he does not so much deplore sin as sin, as he deplores the punishment which he expects from a righteous God. The effect of his affection is, therefore, very unfavorable indeed, for instead of returning to God, he tries to fly from Him in aversion and distrust. How different is the sorrow of Titius! It, also, arises from the knowledge of God's justice, and of the guiltiness of his sin; but above all, from a correct perception of the evil nature of sin itself; from knowledge of the loving-kindness and grace of God against whom he has sinned, whereby he has deprived himself of the blessed favor of that God whose communion and service he has learned to know as his greatest good. This sorrow, therefore, makes him long after God and desire to be united with Him. He cannot leave Him, but returns to Him through the Mediator. It becomes his earnest desire and endeavor to obey God, and not to transgress again His commandments.

Thus it is with their religious joy. Caius has some pleasant experience of joy and contentment, but cannot name any grounds on which this joy and comfort are built. The consolations of Scius were heart-rejoicing, but sprang from a contemplation of God's goodness in nature and in general; not from faith in his grace in Christ; just as if it were not necessary to respect and thankfully embrace that grace, in order to participate in it; or it originated in the working of his imagination, which made him consider something or other, as a particular proof of the Divine love towards him. And the effect of his joy is no other, than his trusting in the experience of this religious affection, and his remaining the former slave of his sinful passions and lusts. The spiritual joy of Titius has, however, different causes, different effects. It comes forth from an understanding, that, enlightened by the Word and Spirit of the Lord, possesses a living knowledge of the riches of the grace of God in Jesus Christ, and from the knowledge of making that grace, the object of his refuge and confidence; and the effect of his joy is, therefore, ardent love to God, and earnest care and purpose to direct his life in accordance with God's holy commandments.

### Section XXI.

Men of apparent religious sentiments, who, after having awakened the hope of their recovery, returned again to the world.

And so I have to address you, unfortunate fellow-men, whom we cannot behold without evincing a feeling of grief and compassion; you, who once had a

mind and soul for religion, but who have given your love again to that same world and sin, of which you once felt the vanity and misery: Perhaps you are avoiding already every thing which might try to awaken again your conscience! Perhaps you do not like to open again one of those books which once you loved; perhaps you will not venture to open this volume for fear of meeting with some soul-disturbing words. But perhaps you are not so deeply fallen; perhaps your eyes will rest, under the providence of that God who has not yet forsaken you, on these pages—and then, O I beseech you, *read on* and *meditate* on what I think it my duty to tell you.

Are you willing to behold your own likeness—regard then with attention the following characteristic. The faith, conversion, and love of many men are as superficial as they are unstable. They are soon moved—moved, however, in a manner that does not penetrate to the inward soul, nor take sufficient root to bear fruits constantly. By an earnest sermon or communion season, in days of affliction and misfortune, or lying down on a bed of sickness, their hearts were strongly affected. *With joy they received the word.* How desirable appeared to them then the happiness of the truly pious! How desirable to share that happiness! O, in that hour it appeared they had come to the conclusion to consecrate themselves to God and His service. A change in the manner of life became really visible, and seemed to indicate a change of mind and choice. But alas, it only lasted for a little while. Their religious impressions did not

bring them daily and sincerely at the feet of Him who could occupy their whole heart, and who was able to work in them that living faith, which is the root of constant spiritual life. The passions awoke. The world smiled. Now they discovered difficulties—here contradiction, there reviling—here loss of former friends, there sacrifice of temporal profits and pleasures. Now they had to bear difficulties, they had to strive, to deny themselves and the world for Jesus' sake. That was too much for their worldly-mindedness. Their zeal diminished, gradually they returned to their former habits and occupations, and losing, day by day, their religious impressions and intentions, they have become more insensible than they ever were before. This is the history of those who hear the word, *and with joy receive it*, but in which it only *dureth for a while;* who, like Demas, have loved again *this present world ;* whose conversion is like a house built upon the sand, "and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

Is this *your* case, behold then what you have lost! Have you ever observed attentively in the spring a tree in full blossom? What a splendid sight! What hope gives such a tree for abundant fruit! But what regret do we feel when that tree loses blossom and fruit, and thus disappoints the hopes of the owner! And that is your likeness. You were designed to grow not under the painful slavery of sin, but to the glory of God, for His service, for heaven! How

much hope did you awake that this glorious plan would be accomplished in you? How pleasant was it to behold you in the first bloom of your religious affections and exercises, when nothing interested you so much as the things of eternity; when you sought for every thing which might contribute to your edification; when you were an attentive and diligent hearer in the house of God; when you avoided the company of the wicked and every sinful pleasure; when you loved the conversation of the wise and the pious; yea, when you could sit down at the feet of the humble friend of God, and learn from him the way that leadeth to heaven! How pleasant was it to behold you in that hour! How much were you beloved by your Christian friends! How great was their expectation of the fruits you would bear to the glory of God and Jesus Christ! How often trembled your name on their praying lips before the throne of grace! And judge now—what must have been their disappointment when they saw, by-and-by, that your earnestness fainted away—and what must be their disappointment now, that they see you shun their company, now that they see you in the arms of your deadly enemy, anew entangled in the snares of temptation and of the world, and therefore in the imminent danger of being lost forever, never to attain the glorious end for which you were created.

Let me engage you to remember the time of religious impressions and exercises. And let me now ask you, in the sight of God, *was it not better with you than to-day?* Did you not feel happier in reli-

gion, although but in its beginning, than the world had ever made you before? And how do you feel at present? Are you really happy? Do you enjoy true peace and rest? Is the world able to give you what you are seeking for? And what will be the end? What will be the lot in eternity of him, who almost converted to the service of God and Jesus, but gained by the inducements of the world, abandoned again His God and Saviour? This sole thought: "I was near the Kingdom of God, but by my own fault I am forever shut out!" This sole thought is sufficient to create a hell in our bosom in eternity. Consider this with calmness and reflection. O, might the former zeal, might your former desires, revive again! Or is that happiness which you once valued so highly no longer happiness to-day? Is that danger, that misery, which once made you fear and tremble, no longer danger and misery to-day? Has the solemn truth which once affected your soul, ceased to be truth any longer?

The Saviour has given us some important instruction in regard to this malady in the parable of the Sower: Matt. xiii. "And when he sowed, some seeds fell upon stony places where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered again." What Jesus intended by these words He explains himself: "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath

he no root in himself, but dureth for a while, for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." The reason then that such people return to the world, is that they are apparently or superficially sensible, but that their hearts in fact are not changed. They depend on this sensibility, and do not seek to be transformed by the renewing of their soul. They have no root in themselves. Their exercises and practice have no foundation. They need that true faith which is the root of spiritual life, and through which only it will be lasting. We may learn from this, not to content ourselves with a superficial sense of religion, but to make it our earnest object that the stony ground of our hearts be broken, and softened by the grace of the Holy Spirit; and to possess that living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which brings us constantly to Him as our hiding-place, and which is the root of unchanging piety and godliness.

"And some fell," thus continued the Saviour, "some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them," which He thus explains: "He that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becometh unfruitful." The cares of this world therefore, and the pleasures of life are the principal causes, as their nature involves, that the word makes no deep impressions on the heart of many men, or that those impressions are soon destroyed and are hindered from bearing fruit. It is therefore necessary to

guard ourselves against this return to the world by doing our best, that these thorns be rooted up in our hearts; that we come to the manly determination to avoid carefully all occasions which may awake our passions; that we absolutely renounce all unprofitable pleasures or a manner of life which tends to corrupt the heart; and that we come to the throne of grace with that heart impure and filled with restless passions as it may be, and implore the influence of that Spirit which Jesus obtained for us, to control these passions by His grace. He who blesseth the earth with rain which softens the ground so that it becomes easy to root up the thorns, is able also to work on our hearts by His Spirit, in order to make us conquerors in the battle against temptations and lusts.

### Section XXII.

Men who have gone astray in the erroneous ways of fanaticism.

There is another wrong direction which the conviction in some people takes, namely: instead of being guided by the faithful Word of God, they adhere, more or less, to *fanaticism*, a malady which it will be necessary to describe; as it is not only a dangerous evil, hurtful to true piety and to which the awakened conscience soon accedes; but also, because many have erroneous and obscure ideas of this malady, for the enemies of true virtue often condemn as fanaticism that which undoubtedly belongs to sincere piety. *What then is fanaticism? Why is it necessary to be cured of or to be on his guard*

*against this malady? Which are its causes and remedies?* These three questions I intend to answer.

*What is fanaticism?* In fact the error and practice of a dangerous sect of men, whose doctrines we cannot too strongly condemn. But in speaking here of *fanaticism*, I will limit myself merely to *that* malady, with which some people among the different denominations of Christians are afflicted. And wherein consists *their* fanaticism? We must make a careful distinction. It is no fanaticism, as the enemies of true piety will have it, when a man is not only outwardly religious, but inwardly pious and sensible of religious affections, such as love, sadness, joy, &c., as was shown before. It is not fanaticism, to believe in the necessity of the working of the Holy Spirit in using the word of God; on the contrary, this is a Bible-doctrine. Nor is it fanaticism if under the hearing or reading of God's word, or under prayer, our attention is particularly fixed on some peculiar passage of Scripture, which is well adapted to our situation, enlightens our views, consoles our hearts, strengthens us in well doing, and if we ascribe that *calling of our attention* to God and His Holy Spirit. He is the Father of Spirits, who holds our souls with the direction of their thoughts in His hand. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to remind us of the truth. Many a declaration of the Bible became thus in the hand of God the means to restore the wandering sinner, or to establish the faint-hearted. It was not by chance, but surely under Divine direction, as the remainder of the history proves, that *the man of*

*Ethiopia*, of which we read Acts viii. was reading Isaiah liii. when Philip saw him.

But by fanaticism we have to understand, "that malady of the soul through which, in judging and acting in regard to religion, we take for our guide, *not* our understanding and the Bible, but lively imaginations and feelings."

*Firstly.* It is fanaticism to disregard the Bible, to call it a dead letter, and the knowledge obtained from it, scholastic wisdom; to neglect the study of the Word of God, to call it unnecessary, and to attach little or no value to the outward means of grace. To think thus is altogether in opposition to Christianity, which regards the Word of God and the truth which it contains, as the seed of regeneration, as the means of faith and the source of consolation and holiness.

*Secondly.* It is fanaticism to suppose and to desire to be instructed by the Holy Spirit, besides and without the Bible; to suppose that He will work in us ideas of which we never heard or knew before, promptings for good, without calling our attention to the constraining motives of the gospel; it is fanaticism when praying for this instruction of the Holy Spirit and when expecting to be answered by some feeling of the heart, to follow that inward light and feeling without trying it by the infallible Word of God. This accords with the erroneous doctrine of the Fanatists, but is in contravention with Christianity, which positively teaches that the Holy Spirit does not discover *new* truths, but enlightens us so as to understand with influence on our hearts; that the Holy

Spirit enlightens and sanctifies through these means, and that this Word of God must be the only rule of faith and walk, by which we have to try our ideas, desires, and acts. Thus we read Romans x. 7, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." See also 1 Pet. i. 22; 1 Pet. iv. 11; Ps. cxix. 9; Isaiah viii. 20; Luke xvi. 29.

*Thirdly.* It must be considered fanaticism, if a man thoughtlessly appropriates to himself some promise which occurs in the Holy Scriptures, and depends upon it for his consolation or joy, merely because those words happened to come before his imagination without having thought of them for a long time past. That it is no fanaticism to ascribe it to God and His Spirit, if we are directed to some interesting declaration or promise of the Bible which is adapted to our situation, we have just remarked, and far be it from us to dispute this; but to take to ourselves all kinds of Bible promises, without looking to the place, time, and circumstances in which they occur, is altogether wrong. To believe, without having accepted Christ as our Saviour, that we are reconciled to God, because unexpectedly we remembered the words of the Bible, "Son, thy sins are forgiven;" to trust that my sickness will not be unto death, because my attention was fixed on the promise to Hezekiah, "I will add unto thy days fifteen years;" this is wrong, this is erroneous. And why? because thus acting, I make no difference between general declarations and promises which regard all sinners or all believers, and those made to particular persons,

which have not the slightest regard to me. I do not console myself with the Holy Scripture or the truths which it reveals, but with *mere words* of the Bible, without regard to the connection in which they occur. It is no proof that they came to me *directly* from God, *because* I thought of them unexpectedly, all at once; for in the same manner I remember hundreds of things which do not regard in any way religion.

*Fourthly.* It is fanaticism, if, in imitation of the sect of fanatics, we think to have communion with other beings. He who suffers by this malady, has a passions for visions and revelations. One day an angel brings him a message, at another time he speaks with the devil, and answers him in reply to his temptations. Now he beholds some rays of light to assure him of God's love,—then, again, a burning fire, with terrible flames, presents itself before his sight—or he sees, in a vision, a person of an amiable disposition, with stretched out arms and bleeding wounds, who kindly smiles at him, and whom he supposes to be Jesus. At such seasons he is no longer himself, and these strong affections, exerting a visible influence over his body, prove the excited state of his imagination.

Sometimes, also, he fancies that he has received some direct revelation from God, to inform him of the events which will come to pass in regard to his country, his own future history, or that of his children and friends.

The possibility of visions and revelations we cannot doubt, as they have taken place in the first years

of the Christian era, as for instance in the history of Paul, when they occurred for necessary purposes. Whether they still take place—one should almost be led to answer in the affirmative, upon the testimony of some creditable, pious men; and still how much reason have we to believe that these people were, in good faith, deceived by their imagination. When the eye of faith regards a crucified Saviour, and mind and heart are engaged in these thoughts; and when the affections are animated, is it then astonishing if the imagination should work also, and represent to itself Christ crucified in as plain a manner as if it really beheld the Saviour? The more so, when a feeble brain and feeble nerves accompany it, and when the vision is seen during a sickness, or by one who recovers from a severe malady?

THIS, HOWEVER, IS CERTAIN, that *they are blessed that have not seen, and yet have believed;* that the most intelligent believers know nothing of such apparitions by experience; that they occur most in the conversion-stories of people of a nervous system, or of simple Christians, who have a tendency to all that is strange and supernatural in religion, and who desire extraordinary occurrences for their assurance; and that in many cases it has been proved that these visions were nothing else but the workings of an indisposed imagination, as persons who, in the first time after their conversion, were taken by them, afterwards, when they had become more experienced Christians, themselves have declared.

The same thing may be said of direct revelations

future events. As surely as that they took place in the first years of Christianity, so surely is there little foundation to believe that they still occur. How often people have prophecied the coming of Christ—how often has the year, month, and day been named that time should be no longer—and still what have all these, and such prophecies, proved to be?

Whenever it may please God to reveal things to us which are not to be found in His Holy Bible, we may expect that He will do it by persons who, like in olden time the prophets and apostles, by the gifts of miracles, or other gifts, will be able to testify their Divine mission, in order to prove the genuineness of the tidings they have in charge to proclaim.

And thus, having seen *what is* fanaticism, and *what is not*, we come to the *second* question: *why is it necessary to be cured of, or to be on our guard against this malady?* This we will easily understand. This malady cannot but have the most unfortunate consequences. For the fanatic, despising God's Holy Word, and directing himself after his imagination and feelings, abandons the real source of wisdom, piety, and consolation. He deprives himself of the true basis of judgment and of action, and introduces a feeble and uncertain religion; by which he not only falls from one error into another, but often considers as duty, that which in reality is crime, as the extravagancies of the Anabaptists may prove. It is also observed, that men of this disposition, become generally unmanageable and obstinate in their opinions, and much disposed, by their foolish pride,

to look down with contempt on their fellow Christians; or when they perceive the unsteadiness of their principles, commence to doubt about everything, and fall from fanaticism to unbelief. In regard to others, this malady is not less injurious. Experience has found out that it is a *contagious* malady. Sincere and humble Christians, who heard others speak of such extraordinary things, as the fanatic pretends to experience, often presume that they ought to experience the same, and become abased and sorrowful. True religion is degraded by fanaticism, and the profane finds cause in this evil to ridicule the workings of the Holy Spirit.

And *what are the causes of this malady, and the remedies against it?*

The *first cause* is *ignorance of the doctrine of the Bible, in regard to the workings of the Holy Spirit.* One forgets that the Holy Spirit does not discover *new truths* to the souls, but enlightens it *through the Word.* A first remedy therefore: Seek after knowledge on this important subject.

A *second* cause is *superstition.* Some people love everything that is secret, extraordinary, and mysterious. Remedy: Watch, therefore, against superstition, and learn to build your conviction on solid grounds of certainty.

*Thirdly.* A part of fanaticism is created *by erroneous ideas of what we have to regard most as evidences of God's grace.* Some people think it consists in *visions*, voices, and revelations. However, and this we name as a third remedy, the evidences which

the Bible names, the renewed affections of the heart, as faith, love, strife against sin, submission, are much more positive proofs than visions and revelations, as the history of *Balaam* may teach us.

A *fourth* cause, is often the *wrong counsel of others*, by falling in the hands of men, who although sincere, are not free from this evil. We therefore, *fourthly*, advise: Be cautious whose directions you follow.

*Fifthly.* Fanaticism not seldom originates in a *well-intentioned, but extravagant zeal, against an opposite extreme.* One hears of people who disregard the workings of the Holy Spirit, and judge the Word alone sufficient. He strives against this, the more, as he discovers in those people, more knowledge than true piety. But alas, zeal without understanding, brings him to the opposite extreme, he disregards the Bible, in order to honor the workings of the Spirit. As a *fifth* remedy, we therefore advise: Be on your guard against such rashness. The safest way, is midway. Very dear be to us the graceful workings and influence of the Holy Spirit, which we so much need with the Word; but just as dear be to us, the Word of the Spirit, which He himself has appointed, as the means through which he works on our mind and heart.

A *sixth* cause is *former unbelief.* We will often see that people, who before were Deists, have a tendency towards fanaticism and superstition. Having discovered how their understanding had misled them, they abandon almost all reason, and follow their imagination and feelings. Be, *sixthly*, on your

guard against this extreme. Must we cease to be rational, because we once mis-used our reason?

Add hereto, *lastly*, besides a hypochondriac system, a lively imagination, and a tender and nervous frame, *some depravities of the soul, which aggravate this sickness*, as *laziness*, which embraces easily an opinion, which rejects all study; *sensuality and distrust*, which desire to see *signs and wonders*, before they can believe; and lastly, *love to sin*, that adheres to extraordinary things, which render it unnecessary to walk in the strait way that leadeth to life; depravities against which we have to watch and to pray, and of which it is highly necessary to get cured.

### Section XXIII.

### Despair.

This is the most deplorable effect which conviction ever produces. The *desperate* meditates on all that can inspire him with fear, and disregards everything which might encourage and console him. The Law speaks to him with a thundering voice, but the Gospel remains unopened. He thinks but of himself, the enormity of his guilt, the wickedness of his heart, but does not look to Christ. He is full of terrible ideas of God's justice, and of God as *a consuming fire* for the wicked, but knows Him not as a gracious Father, in Jesus Christ. He trembles at the thought of judgment and eternity. Not a ray of hope finds its way into his darkened soul. It is in vain to hope. Hell is his destiny. He loses all courage—lives on in constant fear and terror—he dares not to call on

God, and cannot save himself—life itself he cannot bear any longer—and in a moment of despair, if God permits it, he commits suicide. Examples of this despair we have in Cain and Judas.

As to the causes of this malady, they originate in men no doubt, from an abstract contemplation of their sins and their terrible consequences, without being accompanied by any insight into the sources of consolation which the gospel opens to the greatest sinner; but partly they originate in an indisposition of the body. The first view of his dangerous and miserable state, his constant meditating upon this point, has affected his nervous system in such a degree, that it constantly feels the effects of these affections, and produces fearful apprehension in the soul, which destroys the clearness of the spirit and renders it unfit for any consolation.

It may, therefore, be well to open to the desperate the gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ; but this will be insufficient unless proper care be taken for the restoration of his body. This we commend to the care of his physician.

*Friendship* must not only watch him, but accompany and occupy him in seeking occasions of diversion and exercise. And his Christian friend must commend him daily in his prayers, to a merciful and gracious God.

## CHAPTER III.

OF THE MALADIES OF MEN WHO ARE DESIROUS TO COME TO GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST; BUT WHO, FOR DIFFERENT DISCOURAGING OBJECTIONS, ARE HINDERED FROM OBTAINING TRUE REST AND STRENGTH FOR THEIR SOULS.

### Section XXIV.

Character of these men in general.

They are convinced "that left to themselves they are lost. But if there is any help for them, that it is only to be found in Jesus Christ and in the grace of God." Their desires are directed to this end. They consider it happiness to look unto God as their reconciliated Father in Christ, to fear and to serve Him in truth. "O how happy," do they often think, "are the truly pious who rejoice in God! Could I be one of them!" They seek the Lord in the way of His means of grace. They read His word. They diligently hear it. They love religious conversation. They pray to God in secret. And still, with all this, they do not obtain true rest for their souls, true consolation, true strength to the practice of virtue and godliness. Sometimes they do not go to God in Christ Jesus; at other times they seek refuge with the Saviour; but never with that faith, that courage and that confidence, which pleaseth Him, and that must give to their prayers earnestness, vehemence, tenderness and constancy. They are filled with discouraging objections. They are God-seeking persons,

but under the influence of *practical* unbelief, as their unbelief is called in distinction from the *theoretic* or *speculative* unbelief of the Deists, who reject the Christian religion. They always feel their need more or less. They think daily on it. They commence and close the day by it. Often it renders them sad and complaining. Often they ask in deep distress: *What must I do to be saved?*

I feel glad of having arrived at this part of the task which I undertook! It is necessary to exhort and to warn; but how pleasant is it to bring consolation to them that mourn, and to open the blessed gospel of reconciliation and grace in all its extent, and to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to sad and fearful souls. Come, suffering Christian, prepare yourself by prayer to God for the spirit of faith, for the consolations which I will endeavor to present to you by the infallible Word of the true God. And may the God of hope direct my spirit and my pen, and fill your souls with all joy and peace through faith in His unchangeable promises in Jesus Christ!

### Section XXV.

#### Introductory remarks.

I know very well that among the causes which prevent you from obtaining consolation for your heart, you might name *the fear of deceiving yourself, and the idea that it is humbler not to believe too easily.* I must therefore warn you *against* this, and remind you that fear of self-deception (however advisable otherwise) may go too far, and become the censurable

scrupulosity of a Thomas; that it might be a proof of humility to be slow in hope and confidence, if we had to trust in our own good qualities and works; but not now, when the gospel invites us to believe with confidence on the ground of God's declarations in regard to His grace in Christ towards guilty sinners. But I know also that the principal cause of your unbelief rests in some discouraging considerations or doubts, originating from ignorance or misconstruction of the true nature of the gospel. It becomes us therefore to examine these considerations, which I hope to show you are entirely groundless. As far as I am able to judge they are the following.

### Section XXVI.

First consideration: Is it possible that I should be saved?

"My infirmities are too many to hope for recovery. Is it possible that a most guilty creature, as I am, and so deeply depraved, so attached to sin, who deserves and must expect death and a fearful eternity, is it possible that such a creature should be saved?" I consent, and more, I consider it necessary, that we be thoroughly convinced of the impossibility, *on our part*, of occasioning that the holy and righteous God, in view of these Divine perfections, should forgive our sins, take away our depravity, restore in us His lost image, make us victorious over death, and render us safe and happy for eternity. No, rather shall we be able to hinder the moon in its course than to do this. But the case changes its appearance when we behold it *on the part of God.*

To convince you of this, I will draw your attention *firstly, to God's omnipotence*, and I do so the more in order to give you the answer of the Saviour himself, on the question of his disciples: "Who then can be saved?" Mark x. 26, 27. "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible." Or would anything be too great, too powerful for Him who said: "Let there be light, and there was light?"

The possibility of your salvation rests, *secondly*, on *the all-sufficiency of our Divine Saviour Jesus Christ.* You believe in the Scriptures; and is it then not perfectly sure that God since the creation of the world has made gracious provisions for the salvation of fallen mankind; that He has promised a Messiah, and that He has fulfilled His promises *in sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh?* Do you not read on every page of the Divine gospel this or equal joyful declarations: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

There is thus a Saviour! and a Saviour who is able to save from all human misery, and to satisfy all our necessities. Was it necessary that God's justice should be satisfied in order that we sinful creatures might receive forgiveness of sin and be restored to God's favor; is it impossible for us to render that satisfaction; Jesus Christ has been willing, as He himself assured us at the institution of the Holy Supper, that His body should be broken and his blood

be shed *for the remission of sin.* He was "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "He hath given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." John i. 29; Eph. v. 2. And the dignity of His person rendered His sacrifice a sacrifice of infinite value, all-sufficient to blot out the most heinous and numberless sins. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins." 1 John i. 7. Are we ignorant, in Jesus we meet with a Divine teacher, who, by *His word* and by *His enlightening Spirit*, can instruct us, with influence on our heart, in all that we need to know. "He is the light of the world, so that whosoever believeth in Him shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life." Are we depraved men, incapable of truly practising God's kind commandments, in Jesus, "who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," (Tit. ii. 14) we find a fulness of spiritual restoring and sanctifying power against our frailty and depravity. This power He possesses by the excellent morality which He preached; by the spotless example which He left us; and by His exaltation as king and Saviour, by which He can communicate the Spirit of conversion and sanctification; that Spirit, by which He opens the heart for the power of his lessons, and inclines it to think and act accordingly. Are we in need of consolation, help, preservation, and guidance on the road on which we travel; in Jesus we have "an advocate with the Father," who "appears in the presence of

God for us." 1 John ii. 1; Heb. ix. 24. The "high priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," Heb. iv. 15; the blessed "head over all things to the church," Eph. i. 22; "the good shepherd, who knows his sheep, who gives them eternal life," and who will care that not "any shall pluck them out of his hand," John x. 11. 27; the conqueror of death and the grave, who at last "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." O, how abundant, how inexhaustible is therefore the fullness of Jesus! "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Heb. vii. 25. And "of his fullness we receive grace for grace." John i. 16.

The possibility of your salvation rests, *thirdly*, on the *plan* "which God has made, and revealed in His holy Word, as to the manner by which we can be saved."

And what is that plan? Does He require, notwithstanding we have lost our estate of righteousness, and are fallen into corruption and depravity, that we should still *merit* the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life, by the strict observance of His commandments, the fulfilling of our duties? O, if that should be the way, we might well despair, whosoever we may be! Such a condition is for you, for me, for all men, impossible in our present depraved state in this world! But no, the gospel does not allow us to form such hard and limited conceptions of God! It

declares that God has been graciously pleased to conconsider the unhappy estate of fallen mankind—that therefore man does not receive remission of sin, forgiveness, and eternal life, by his own righteousness, which is in *the obedience of God's law;* that God has graciously determined not to exact that severe obedience, as in that case the salvation of man would have become impossible; but that He is a God who justifieth the wicked, who forgives the sins of the greatest sinners, as unworthy as they may be found, by free grace for Jesus' sake, on account of His merits, without price, without being moved thereto by preceding good works; only that the means by which we obtain that forgiveness is *faith; faith* by which we accept all this as true because God declares it—*faith* by which we fully consent and adopt the appointed way of salvation, and renounce the foolish plan of justifying ourselves, and trust entirely, sinful as we are, to God, who justifieth the sinner in Jesus Christ. The gospel, *lastly*, declares that this unlimited confidence of an unworthy sinner in a God of infinite grace in Christ Jesus, is the true means to awaken love to God, and desire and zeal to serve Him. Meditate, to be fully convinced of this consoling doctrine, which is the great and principal doctrine of the gospel, under earnest prayer, on the following places, which I, from many others, have selected: John iii. 36; John v. 24; Acts xiii. 38; Rom. v. 20, 21; Rom. iv. 5, 6; Rom. iii. 22, 23, 24; Rom. i. 16, 17; and further, the whole of the first five chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.

After all this, I suppose, you will not any longer doubt of the possibility of your being saved; the more when you recollect that it is indisputably proved that mortal and sinful men, in a like situation as ours, have obtained salvation. Remember the conversion of Paul, of adulteresses, and publicans, of the most blinded and sensual heathen, and even now of monsters of wickedness, who have given proofs of unfeigned piety; and of so many who die heroically, rejoicing in God, through Christ Jesus, and enjoying on earth a foretaste of heaven! Would God not be able to glorify His grace in you, as He glorified it in them? What was possible with Him in regard to others, would that be impossible in regard to you?

### Section XXVII.

Second consideration.—Is there ready-willingness with God and Jesus to save ME?

"I see plainly the possibility of the salvation of sinners, but on what ground can I believe that the Saviour is willing to save *me*, that He calls *me*, that there is grace with God in Jesus for *me* also? Must I not find my name, as it were, written in His Word, must I not experience something extraordinary on which my belief may safely rest?"

To dissolve this doubt of yours, I will call your attention, *firstly*, to the *infinite love of God and Jesus*. Who is God? The most merciful and love-worthy being that we can possibly imagine. *God is love.* All nature preaches it. *God is love.* The same does His revealed Word. How repeatedly and positively

speaks that Word of the richness of Divine love, and of God's *pleasure* in the conversion and life of sinful men? "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away His face if ye return unto Him." 2 Chron. xxx. 9. "God is love!" 1 John iv. 8. Read further, Isaiah lv.; Psalm cxxxvi.; Luke xv.; Lament. iii. 31, 32, 33; John iii. 16. And what ground is there after this to suppose that God would not wish *your* conversion and *your* life? On the contrary, in these declarations you must find an encouragement to come to God through Jesus Christ. God's justice is fully satisfied by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Word absolutely requires "that he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. xi. 6. The love of the Lord Jesus is so exceedingly great that we would endeavor in vain to measure its height or depth, its length or breadth. His whole life was a chain of works of love. Wherever He appeared, He left the loud-speaking proofs of His benevolence; and never came a sufferer to Him, without finding a gracious Saviour. The greatest sinners He sought *to gather as a hen gathered her chickens.* What can be compared in the least degree to that love of Jesus, which willingly underwent the greatest, the most painful sufferings, and died the cursed death of the cross, to save hell-deserving sinners? And does not that Saviour, who

has thus shown His infinite love towards a sinful world, merit your unlimited confidence? Would you not act towards the Most-merciful as you would act towards any man of well known benevolence? He who died for sinners, would He not possess sufficient love to hear and to help the sinner that comes to Him to be saved?

I must call your attention, *secondly*, to the *invitations of God and Jesus, which are positively addressed to you.*

What is your case, my friend? Does God leave you to yourselves? Must the first step for reconciliation be done on your part? O how far from it! Observe it, O observe it, how in the ways of God's providence this language has reached your ear: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. Observe it how Jesus calls *you*, also, in different ways. Or does He not call you when He speaks to you in His gospel; when He encourages you by manifold arguments, and in the most tender manner, to believe in Him, and to give Him your heart? Does He not call you, when, in His providence, He leads you into such circumstances and ways, as make you pause and reflect on your true condition, and most valuable interests; which impress on your soul, "*O man be wise and seek your safety* with God in Christ!" Does He not call

you when He knocks at your heart by His Spirit and convinces you of what you need, and must be; when you feel an inward desire of the soul, an anxiety to go to Him, and to throw yourself at His feet? Is that not the work of grace which he employs towards you, and which He does beseech you not to receive in vain? And as Jesus calls you, does that not prove His willingness to help you? If you are prayed in the name of God, "Be ye reconciled unto God," would it be less than absurdity to ask, "Will my return to God be pleasing and acceptable to Him?" And what doubt can there possibly remain on this point? For, *thirdly, God's declarations and invitations are general, and exclude none.* "Him that cometh to me," the Saviour says, "I will in no wise cast out." "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." See John vi. 27–58. "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Rom. i. 16. These general declarations and promises are found on almost every page throughout the gospel. And if now, according to these declarations, *whosoever* believeth in Jesus, shall participate in that salvation, then it is very plain that it regards *you*, that if *you* come to Jesus by faith, you will not be cast out, but live, the more as this is the direct commandment of God; for *not* to believe in Jesus, *not* to come to Him is regarded by the gospel as a great sin, which in the last day shall be judged and punished. "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn

away from Him that speaketh from heaven." Heb. xii. 25. See 1 John v. 10; John xvi. 8, 9; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 36; 2 Thess. i. 8–10.

"But ought I not to read my name in the gospel." Do you not feel the absurdity of such a pretension? For it would be the same for your fellow-men, and in that case the Bible ought to contain the names of all the millions of men that will be saved. And besides, you are named in the gospel in such a manner that you are plainly indicated? Do you not belong to *the world?* "But God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 16. Do you not belong to the *sinners?* "But this a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Do you not belong to the creatures, to those that are spiritually sick, and lost; to the ungodly, the wicked. But in regard to all these, the gospel contains the most encouraging declarations. Mark xvi. 15, 16; Matt. ix. 12; Luke xix. 10; Rom. v. 6; Ezek. xxxiii. 11. But perhaps you say: "I ought to experience, or to receive from God at least something, which might assure me that He includes me in the offer of His grace in Christ? But tell me, wherein should it consist? In a vision or an audible voice from Heaven? But as others should have the same need of it as you, how many miracles would God have to perform through all ages and at all places, every day and every hour, to satisfy the unbelief of men? Must we not be satisfied that the

gospel, which, containing so many *general* declarations, has been confirmed by so many *signs and wonders?* See Heb. ii. 3, 4; and Rom. x. 6–9.

Or, you say, "I ought at least to have experienced such a change in my heart, as to prove to me that God's Spirit worked in me. Could I only know with certainty that the feelings of my soul were the work of God, I would have confidence to accept Jesus as my Saviour, and go through Him to God."

But, my friend, besides that this ground of confidence, as it depends on our variable disposition and occupations, would be but a very unsteady foundation; besides that, it is impossible to recognize in our soul, the saving work of the Holy Spirit with any certainty *before* we believe, so let me say that it is not *required* to know this, in order to come with confidence to God in Jesus Christ. This would be necessary if the Gospel declared: "All those who are so or so situated, who possess such or such qualities, who know that God's Spirit has commenced a good work in them, only and alone those, thus provided, and coming to Jesus and believing in Him, shall inherit eternal life." But the gospel, as we have already seen, knows nothing of these restrictions. God calls sinners, just as they are, whether they know that the good work has been commenced in them or not. It is simply: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life." These unlimited declarations must be sufficient to convince you, that you are at liberty and

called to believe in Jesus Christ, and to come to Him, without being assured that the workings of your soul are of the right kind and wrought in you by the Holy Spirit.

### Section XXVIII.

Third consideration, derived from our unworthiness, or the greatness of our sins.

"How unworthy am I? Can there be forgiveness and grace for such a sinner? How often, how stoutly, how long have I been sinning against God. How many are my secret sins; sins, which I should be ashamed to unveil before any mortal being? My heart is a troubled source of manifold transgressions. How often have I sinned against light and reason, against the accusing voice of conscience; and this against the high and holy, the just and good God, who never ceased to bless me! According to His Word I must believe that He will be gracious unto sinners, but that He should be gracious unto so great a sinner as I am, how can I reasonably expect it? No, I dare not throw myself at His feet. To ask Him still for mercy, appears to me a presumption, which only would serve to fill the measure of my sins." Let me prove to you, my friend, that this objection is altogether groundless; for,

*Firstly.* The object of Jesus' coming on earth was to save *sinners;* innocent and righteous men are not to be found in this world. "They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick," says Jesus: "But go ye and learn what it meaneth, I will

have mercy and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Matt. ix. 12, 13. "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke xix. 10; see 1 Tim. i. 15.

*Secondly.* All the work of Jesus as Saviour, and the way of our salvation as divinely ordered, (see Sec. XXVI.) suppose us to be *unworthy sinners*, and are precisely adapted to our wants as unworthy sinners. Were we holy and undepraved, there would be no need of a Saviour, nor of grace.

*Thirdly.* There is no sin so great but it can be forgiven; firstly, on account of the all-sufficiency of the merits of Christ; and secondly, because the source of forgiveness is the free grace of that God, whose actions cannot be limited by any one. Rom. v. 20, 21.

*Fourthly.* As we have seen already before, Jesus calls sinners just as they are; his declarations and promises are general, without excluding any one, numerous as his sins may be.

*Fifthly.* The conduct of Jesus during his sojourn on earth, affirms this in the most positive manner. He did not go to the least depraved part of the nation, but He looked unto the most neglected men, and visited publicans, and the greatest sinners, to instruct them, and to gain their hearts. How beautifully did He defend that conduct of His, in the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Penny, and the Prodigal Son! Luke xv. Parables, which never can be recommended too highly, for the meditation of those who are alarmed by the enormity of their sins.

Jesus left none unanswered: the woman of Canaan, nor the heathen centurion, the adulteress nor the unrighteous Zaccheus, publicans nor sinners, not even the thief on the cross! He commanded His apostles to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins, *beginning at Jerusalem!* Jerusalem, that wicked Jerusalem, long the seat of all kinds of iniquity, where the schemes were laid and executed of crucifying the Lord of Glory; where the wild and insane cry had filled the air: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children;" Jerusalem was the place where they must *begin* to preach *repentance and forgiveness of sins!*

*Lastly.* Look at the examples, which prove that the greatest sins are forgiven by a gracious God. Remember the sins of Lot, of David, of Solomon, of Manasseh, of the idolatrous, sensual, unrighteous Corinthians; and above all, that example, which has been set by our compassionate Saviour, to destroy forever the doubt which men could derive from the greatness of their sins! It is the example of Paul, who, to his other sins, had added *this*, that he had been "breathing out threatenings and slaughter, against the disciples of the Lord." Or must not all doubt disappear in the heart, depressed by the weight of sin, when we read the affectionate and consolatory language: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pat-

tern to them which should hereafter believe in him, to life everlasting." 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

But, you may say, "I read in the Bible, 'God heareth not sinners.' John ix. 31. 'The Lord is far from the wicked, but he heareth the prayer of the righteous.' Prov. xv. 15, 29. 'The sacrifice of the wicked, is an abomination to the Lord.'" vs. 8. But the first quoted passage, read in its connection, means that God will not work a miracle at the request of a wicked man; and in the latter, we must understand by *the wicked*, such persons as refuse to forsake the ways of iniquity and sin. Such men, God surely does not hear.

You may think, perhaps, that "to believe in the forgiveness of your sins, notwithstanding their greatness, is at the same time *to slight sin, and* FEED *it.*" Not at all; this would be the case, if we believed that God forgives sins, because it is not exactly such a great evil, and if we embraced with confidence the salvation in Christ, in order to sin the more quietly. But this is not the case, as we have seen already before.

"But, O," you say, "it is too much for me, too great a blessing, to trust with confidence, that God, whom I have so long offended, should forgive *all my sins, for Christ's sake, and make me a gift of eternal, never-ending felicity.*" Truly, my friend, the riches of God's grace are infinitely great; but if they were too great for you, they would be too great for all your fellow-sinners, and none could inherit eternal life. We could never have expected such a glorious

end, if God had not planned, effected and declared, this way of salvation unto man. But now, God *has* done this, through His Son Jesus Christ, and commands us to believe in Jesus, and through Him in God, as the God of our salvation; and far from considering this presumptuous, let us regard it as obedience to His Divine command, and honoring to His truth. Thus the greatness of God's lovingkindness and grace may astonish us, may break our hearts, and fill our souls with love and gratitude, but never awake in us a doubt as to the certainty of His declarations.

### Section XXIX.

Fourth consideration, derived from the sin against the Holy Spirit.

"But perhaps, I have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. I have often disappointed the arousing influence of the Holy Spirit, often drowned the appalling voice of conscience, often tried to disperse the good impressions which found a place in my heart. In my youth, I have often blasphemed the most holy truths, I have sometimes ridiculed the Saviour, His doctrine, the Holy Spirit, and His workings and influence. And what says the Saviour, Luke xii. 10. 'Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.' For me, therefore, there remains, alas, not a single ray of hope. My sin will not be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come."

It is not my intention to dissolve this consideration at any length; I do not consider it necessary for the object of this work, and will therefore limit myself to the following remarks.

This consideration originates entirely in ignorance and misinterpretation of the nature of this "sin against the Holy Spirit." Many who take only the mere words, understand by it "to act against light and conviction, to disappoint the animations of the Holy Spirit, to grieve, to strive against the Spirit," and so on. Thus acting, it is true, we sin against the Holy Spirit, but not *those* sins which the Saviour called *unpardonable.* What man is not, in some degree at least, guilty of them? And who then would be saved? But the sin against the Holy Spirit was a particular and most dreadful crime of the Pharisees during the time of Jesus' sojourn on this world. They blasphemed, reviled, and despised the miracles which Jesus performed by the Spirit of God, as works of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. They said so against their better knowledge and conviction. They did so, not in a moment of passion, but with perseverance and with the wicked design to discredit the miracles of Jesus in the estimation of others, and to destroy thereby the belief in his doctrine. This conduct the Saviour called, as we will plainly see, by reading Matt. xii. 21–23; and Mark iii. 22–30, *the sin against the Holy Ghost*, by which we therefore must understand: "that crime of ascribing the indisputable miracles of the Holy Spirit, to confirm the Gospel, intentionally, against inward

conviction, and from enmity against Jesus and His doctrine, as works of Satan."

We may discover something in regard to the reasons *why* this sin was unpardonable, by looking at the pernicious influence of this evil, as the man who is guilty of it, hardens his heart in unbelief; despises the last means which might work for his recovery, and renders thereby his conversion, and consequently the forgiveness of his sins, utterly impossible. From these remarks we may draw *three* consequences, which may relieve the Christian from his state of anxiety in regard to his consideration whether or not he be perhaps guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit. The *first* one is, that this crime, in the present time, when no miracles are performed, strictly speaking, cannot be committed. The *second* one is, that if this sin still be committed, it will very seldom occur in such an extended manner as to be unpardonable. For instance, those evil men in our day, who by their writings, discourses or exhibitions, rage against and blaspheme the plainly confirmed religion of Jesus Christ, who rashly and profanely declare His miracles as the work of dexterity, and no better than the tricks of a juggler, cannot be acquitted of this crime, that is, if they commit it, not in blindness and ignorance, but from a principle of hatred, in spite of conscience, in defiance of their convictions, and the dictates of their hearts; but how rare are such monsters! And you at least, my Christian friend, who feel alarmed on account of your sins, you, who thirst after God and Jesus, cannot accuse yourself of such

an evil! The more so, as the *third* consequence we draw from our remarks is this, that a man who is alarmed over his sins *cannot* be guilty of this hideous crime. For, as we have seen, this sin causes by its own nature the heart to be hardened in unbelief, to pass into a state of insensibility, and to lose all possible hope of being converted. And therefore, are you really desirous of forgiveness of sin, reformation and salvation, behold then freely in these sentiments the decided proofs of your not being stained by an evil which chases all reflection and every good impression from the soul. *Only believe, and fear not. God is gracious, and the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sins.*

### Section XXX.

**Fifth consideration, derived from the want of a truly broken heart.**

"Though it be true (some may say) that God graciously forgives sin for Jesus' sake, I have no ground to seek refuge in that grace without a truly broken heart and contrite spirit; and, alas, I do not sufficiently possess this. Others labor under such deep impressions of the enormity of their sins! How great were their fears and agitations! Their tears and groans, their deadly silence, their avoiding of all society, their disgust towards food and drink, the paleness of their countenance, their ghostly appearance, everything proved their earnest desire to be saved! How little do I experience of all this myself! No, my heart is surely not broken, my repentance too faint, my knowledge and perception of my sins

and depravity too insignificant to confide myself to the compassion of the Saviour."

In order to take this objection away, it is, above all, necessary to make a proper distinction between one thing and another.

It is perfectly true, that we ought to possess a humble and broken heart. In our sins, we find sufficient reason to mourn over them, to abhor ourselves, and to humble ourselves before God. Nor must it be denied that a broken heart is often regarded in the Bible as a state of the soul which is well-pleasing to God, and that the gospel addresses itself, although it speaks to men of all dispositions of heart, particularly to those that mourn, and are of a humble mind. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps. xxxiv. 18. David prayed, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ps. li. 17. "Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly, but the proud he knoweth afar off." Ps. cxxxviii. 6. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matt. v. 3; Isa. lvii. 15.

And lastly, in order to believe in Christ for salvation, it is necessary that we should have some knowledge and sense of our sins, and not remain in a state of indifference about them; not so as to make it a ground of confidence to believe in Jesus, but in order to feel the need of a Saviour, to feel an interest in Jesus Christ, to value, to adore, and to accept, with gratitude, the grace of God in Jesus; and it is therefore our duty to become more and more familiar with

our sinful and depraved state, and with ourselves, so as to become more humble and penitent before God.

But however certain and commendable all this may be, it must not lead us to the belief that a broken heart is the *necessary quality*, *condition*, or *requisite*, which alone can give us the liberty of coming to Christ, and without which we shall not be permitted to accept of God's grace in Jesus. Such an opinion is wrong and groundless, as we shall now show.

*Firstly.* We have seen already, on a former occasion, that the declarations of the gospel are general and unconditional. They do not say, "All those that possess such or such a broken heart, and come to Jesus, provided with that requisite, will have eternal life;" but "*whosoever* believeth." The ground, therefore, of my confidence, in coming to God through Jesus, is not my broken heart, but the declarations of the gospel which invite the sinner, as he is, to come to God and the Saviour.

*Secondly.* It is the great doctrine of the gospel that we be "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. iii. 24. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. iv. 5. We, therefore, must not suppose that we have to move God, by our solicitude and tears, to grant us forgiveness, nor must we make our broken-heartedness the ground of our confidence, but submit ourselves to the counsel of God, to receive forgiveness, by His free grace, for Jesus' sake; and faithfully trust, as impenitent or unbroken of heart

as we may appear in our own sight, in that God who "justifieth the ungodly."

*Thirdly.* To whom shall we go to obtain that broken heart and contrite spirit, if not to Jesus, who came into the world to cure the blindness of the blind; to Him, who has obtained that Spirit which can break and soften the stony heart, and who gives us every gift of grace that we need? As long as we do not know God as He is gracious in Jesus Christ, we may be afraid of Him, but true penitence cannot dwell in our souls. This only originates from a clear perception of the lovingkindness and grace of God and the Saviour.

*Lastly.* It is necessary, as we have already observed, to have *some* knowledge and anxiety in regard to our sins, in order to believe in Christ with interest for our souls, but *the degree* of this knowledge and of anxious feelings is nowhere stipulated. Their object is accomplished if they prove sufficient to lead us to the Saviour, with the earnest desire of being saved through Him.

Dismiss, therefore, the thought that you need a more broken heart before you can freely come to Jesus; but thank God that your heart is broken to such a degree as to feel the necessity of the Saviour; and do you long after a deeper sense of your unworthiness and repentance, so go and seek it, without any by-ways, with Him who came to work even the first and smallest good, in every sinner that repenteth, and who calls you to Him in the state of heart which you may possess.

SECTION XXXI.

Sixth consideration, derived from the doctrine of Election.

Jesus says: "*All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.*" John vi. 37. "If I, therefore, only knew that I belonged to those *given by the Father*, or to God's elect, O then I would have full freedom to go to Him. But may I suppose this? What an unutterably great favor to be known in love of God from all eternity! And could that happiness be mine? Few are there that are able to find the strait way that leadeth to life, and may I believe that I am fortunate enough to belong to their number?"

This thought distresses the hearts of many, who, however, are far from abusing this doctrine of predestination to carelessness and perseverance in sin, (as the worldly man, Sec. XIII.); and referring them to said Sec. XIII., as what I have said in regard to *carelessness* is applicable also to *discouragement*, I will here merely add a few remarks.

You say: "Perhaps I do not belong to God's elect." But to your *perhaps* I may oppose another, and say: "Perhaps you do belong to God's elect." The case is entirely unknown unto you, and ought you, with any reason, to be alarmed about unknown and secret things? Is the probability not in favor of your election? Are you not privileged above thousands and millions of your fellow-creatures? Are you not above millions privileged to live under the light of the gospel, to be a partaker in baptism of the benefits

of God's covenant and church, to belong among those who may thank God that their desire after God is awakened, and that they no longer remain careless about the most important interests of their souls? Allow me to ask you further: Is it necessary to know of our being elected, before we have freedom to believe in Christ, to trust in God? This, your consideration gives me to understand. And still, to know this beforehand, is neither necessary, nor, in the ordinary ways of God, possible. It is not *necessary*, because the gospel nowhere requires it; on the contrary, it assures us positively, that "him that cometh to Jesus, He will in no wise cast out," without making any mention of OUR *knowledge* about our being elected or not. It is *impossible* to know this, in the ordinary ways of God, because the only evidence of our election is faith itself, with its effects. And why should you then be alarmed about your want of knowledge, in regard to a thing which it is yet impossible for you to know? LET THIS BE SUFFICIENT UNTO YOU: that God has declared that if *you* believe, *you* will have everlasting life; and let it become your first thought, your first employment, to go confidently to God in Christ, and to live for Him in His strength. In this way your election will be proved *afterwards*, as was the case with all those which now glorify God in Heaven!

Is the greatness of the case any obstacle to you? But how can this be any reasonable ground of doubt, as the same happiness which would be too great for

you, would be too great for every sinner, and should exclude all?

Are you perhaps troubled by the small number of them that shall inherit eternal life? That number may be small in comparison to the whole world; but will it be small in regard to them among whom you may now count yourself? Your own heart will tell you that you accept the gospel, that you are interested in the spiritual welfare of your soul, and that your wishes and desires extend to God and Jesus. And of such persons will there be only *few* which will be saved? Do not forget that this number, however small compared to the world, will form a multitude from all tongues and nations which no man can count; by which we not only have to think of pious men, who have given the speaking proofs of their virtue and godliness, but also of children who died in their infancy, and of many hidden disciples of Jesus who in secret call upon His holy name, and who are united to Him by invisible threads. But be that number great or small, it does not destroy the certainty of God's Word, which shows us a sure way to life, and gives us the greatest encouragement to take this road with full confidence of a happy result. What was the answer of Jesus, when some one asked him: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Did He answer *many?* or *few?* This was His answer: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Thus He speaks yet to us, and we must therefore neither engage nor trouble ourselves with inquiries of curiosity. Our object must be to *strive to enter.*

### Section XXXII.

Seventh consideration, taken from the doctrine of our inability.

"'No man,' says Jesus, 'can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.' John vi. 44. I can therefore not truly come to Jesus unless I be privileged by this drawing grace. What I do or attempt without this, it will be all in vain."

True, my friend, this grace is for you, for me, and for every one highly necessary; but (besides what I have said already, Section XIV., on the subject of man's inability) allow me to ask: *Is this grace so unattainable for you?* Do not neglect to represent to yourself the Bible doctrine on this subject *completely* and not in part. If the Bible only spoke of our inability without showing us the means of recovery, our situation would be deplorable, desperate. But the same gospel that preaches our inability, preaches at the same time that the Spirit of faith and conversion, which draws men to Jesus, has been obtained by the Saviour for powerless sinners; that this Spirit worketh faith by the Word, which God has graciously given to us; and that God will give the Holy Spirit to all that ask Him. How consolatory is the promise, Luke ix. 9–14. Be therefore encouraged and strengthened by regarding the subject from this side. Pray often, pleading this Divine promise, for the Spirit of faith. And search with attention and meditation the Word of the gospel, which is the provided medium to work and to establish true faith in our hearts.

This consideration must detain you the less, as you may, *secondly*, observe *that already a divine drawing to Christ has commenced to work in you, and you therefore cannot consider yourself any longer as unable to believe in Christ.* Or does not God draw us to Jesus by his Word, by the preaching of that Word, by the favorable ways of Providence, by His Spirit knocking at our hearts? Moreover, I speak to you who are desirous towards God in Jesus. Whence this holy desire? Who has opened your eyes to make you see with clearness and solicitude that you are a sinner; who is it that made you long after God, His grace and communion; who is it that made you heartily willing to be saved by Jesus Christ? Who is it that makes you often listen with redoubled attention, or bow your knees to obtain peace and strength for your soul? Who else but God by His Spirit? And should you not herein recognize the drawing hand of your Heavenly Father?

Perhaps you did not, in the supposition that this *drawing* of God's grace would be something altogether different, something very affecting or violent. But this thought is the consequence of your erroneous ideas on this subject. From the 6th chapter of John, verses 44, 45, 46, we learn that this drawing of the Father to Christ exists in a Divine instruction by means of His Word and Spirit. It does not at all consist in something affecting or violent, by which a man could be forced in an irrational manner, against his own will, to come to Jesus. It is a Divine working, by means of the Word, through which we com-

mence to give attention to that Word, and are gradually taught and enlightened by it, in such a manner, as to incline our will freely and softly, to seek, with interest and confidence, refuge in Jesus as our only Saviour.

Thank God, my friend, for that which you have already received. Use the powers which have been given to you in order to overcome every obstacle which may retain you from complete faith! And as these obstacles principally consist in want of clear insight into the true doctrine of the gospel, and the influence of some discouraging consideration, so endeavor to learn the littleness of such objections or doubts by a diligent study of the Bible with prayer to God for His enlightening Spirit; seek after a clear understanding of the way of salvation *according to the gospel*, and you will be able to trust yourself with a humble confidence of faith to God in Jesus Christ.

### Section XXXIII.

**Eighth consideration, on account of the different manner by which the way to life is represented in the Bible.**

"How have I to direct my thoughts in order to form correct ideas of, and to walk in the way to life, according to the gospel? That way is represented in so many forms, as to produce darkness and confusion in my soul."

Allow me, my friends who are troubled by these thoughts, to call your attention to the following remarks.

You say: "Sometimes I hear that God offers himself to be our God; then again that we only can come to God through Christ." The last is certainly the plain and general doctrine of the Bible. The Holy God treats with sinful man through a Mediator. But this fact is so well known that it is not necessary to repeat it in every instance. It is understood that if God declares that He is willing to be the God of the sinner, He will be this in that adorable way of salvation set forth in the Holy Scriptures; the same as the believing Christian in his prayers to God does not always particularly dwell on the Mediator. He knows for once, and in his prayers it is constantly before him, that God is gracious only in the beloved. He knows no other God, he trusts in no other God, but in Him who in Christ Jesus will be the God of the sinner.

You say: "Sometimes I read: Believe in God; then again, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; or again: Repent, believe in the gospel." These are no different ways of salvation, but directions of the same way, represented in different aspects. Faith must be engaged about all that God declares in the gospel. Therefore it is said in general terms: *Believe in the gospel.* In that gospel we find declarations in regard to God and Jesus. In so far as faith is engaged about declarations regarding Jesus, it is said: *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ;* and so far as it is engaged in regard to God, as He is gracious in Christ, it is called *faith in God*, in Him who justifieth the sinner. Faith must go hand in hand with

repentance or conversion; so you read: *Repent and believe.* "Faith sometimes seems to consist in confidence in the Divine promises; at other times, in reliance on the power and love of the Saviour; then again, in accepting His merits; or in seeking refuge in the fulness of His grace." All this is again inseparably united, and therefore you read of the one or the other as the occasion demands it. God testifies in His word of the power, the love, the merits, the fulness of grace of His Son; and promises to whomsoever accepts Jesus, eternal life. If I trust therefore in what God declares and promises it follows that I rely on the power and love of Jesus, that I embrace His merits, and seek refuge in the fullness of His grace.

"Sometimes I am exhorted to remain in Christ as the branch in the vine, as every one that dwells in him bears much fruit; then again, it is the Holy Spirit who is represented as working in our hearts." No doubt, the Holy Spirit works sanctification in the heart of the sinner; but it was Jesus Christ who by His blood, obtained that agency of the Spirit. It is Jesus Christ, who, exalted on the right hand of God, commands the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

To explain this better, I will make some observations as to the manner in which the sinner must come to God in the ways of the gospel. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is represented in the Bible as upholding and maintaining the majesty of the Divine Being; as the Sovereign of the World, who has sent, and given, and exalted His Son; who for

His sake grants forgiveness of sin to guilty sinners who come unto Him through Christ; and who is ready to prove himself to them, in the fullest terms, their God. The Son of the Father Eternal is represented in the gospel as *the word* which *was made flesh;* who came into the world to be the Mediator and Saviour of sinners; who obtained eternal redemption of sin by the blood of His cross; and who is in Heaven, as the merciful and faithful High Priest, the advocate with the Father of all who believe in Him. The Holy Spirit is represented in the gospel, as working in the heart of depraved sinners, to console, to sanctify, and to transform it. Thus all grace and mercy descend unto us from the love of the Father, the salvation of the Son and the working of the Holy Spirit.

From what we have said, it follows that in our communion with God we must go to the Father, by the Spirit, through Christ Jesus. "For through Him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Eph. ii. 18. We must commence with and dependently on the Holy Spirit. We must recognize Jesus Christ as the Son of God and accept him as our Mediator; we must seek refuge in Him and trust ourselves to Him, so that His sacrifice may avail for us and he be our Advocate. Through Christ we must go unto the Father, confess before Him our sins, and seek by Him forgiveness and salvation, on ground of the merits of Christ; we must make Him the principal object of our adoration, in whom

we must finish our prayers and whom we must glorify as the first source of mercy and grace.

The sinner who comes to God, in the way of the religion of the gospel, is brought by the Spirit to the knowledge of himself, to the perception of his sins and wants, and to the acknowledgment of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus dependently on the Holy Spirit, he bows his knees before Jesus, whom angels also worship, and who, according to His God-head, is omniscient; and often opening for Him his heart in the following manner: "O Son of God! Lord Jesus Christ, I come to Thee on thy invitation and because God declares to me in His Word that in Thee is Life, and who commands me to believe in Thee and to address myself to Thee. Thou, O Lord Jesus, art the Christ who was to come, the Son of the Living God. O let me be saved by Thee. I am a sinful, guilty being, unable to reconcile myself with God. But Thou, Lord Jesus, art that Mediator, whose body was broken and whose blood was shed for the forgiveness of sin, and who art now exalted on the right hand of the Father as our merciful High Priest. O, blessed Saviour, let me participate in that salvation; may thy sacrifice avail for my sins; be Thou my advocate with the Father. My mind is darkened, my heart depraved and corrupt. But thou art the Light of the world. Thou art that Lord and King who canst establish Thy throne in my heart, who wilt purify unto thyself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. O, enlighten, purify, and reform *me* also! Give me to believe in Thee, and to come to Thee;

give me this as the least grace I have to receive from Thee. I am unworthy of it, but Thou camest into this world to save unworthy sinners. Him that cometh to Thee, this is thy promise, Thou wilt in no wise cast out. What must I not expect from Thy love, which Thou hast shown in Thy death on the cross. Thou art the first who by Thy word callest me with tender words, who commandest me to accept Thee. And therefore, O Lord, be gracious unto me according to Thy word. From this moment I accept Thee as my Saviour, my Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King! I renounce all other ground of confidence which I might find in myself, or in any other creature, and will only hope in Thee. I render myself to Thee; all my confidence, all my expectations rest with Thee alone."

The sinner who comes to God according to the religion of the gospel, acts in the above manner towards the Lord Jesus Christ; but he does not conclude with this: through Him, as the Mediator, he goes to the Father. Before Him he falls down, in the name of Jesus, and prays: "O, God and Father, in obedience to Thy command, I have sought refuge with Thy Son, and have accepted Him as my Saviour. And now I approach to Thee, according to the freedom which Thou hast granted me, in His name, to find grace in Thy sight. I confess before Thee, and, O God, may it be with deep humility and shame, that I have much and often sinned against Thee; that I am not longer worthy to be called Thy son; that I have justly deserved to be forever shut out. But I

plead, O God, the blood of Thy Son, in whom Thou art well pleased. I plead the riches of Thy grace, of which the gospel everywhere testifies. I plead Thy positive promise, that for Jesus' sake there is forgiveness with Thee for the greatest sinner, and Thy constraining invitation, *be reconciled unto God.* O Father, forgive me, for Jesus' sake, and in Thy infinite grace, all my iniquities. Be my God and my Father, and accept me among the number of Thy children and of Thy household. Thou hast declared that I would be welcome with Thee as the prodigal son was with his father. Thou hast declared that there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth. O, make me believe, in spirit and in truth, that in Christ Jesus Thou art my Father and my God, so that I may rejoice in Thee, that I may tenderly love Thee as my Father, that I may obey and glorify Thee, and trust in Thee under all circumstances, and for all I need, with the confidence of a child towards a father that loveth him."

### Section XXXIV.

Ninth consideration, derived from the supposition of seeking God in vain.

Sincerus desires, with all his heart, to be a sincere, active, and cheerful Christian, who, united to Christ, may confidently believe that he is at peace with God, through faith in Him, and, being transformed in mind and heart, no longer lives unto himself, but unto Him who died for him. At that happy state he seeks to arrive. Often-times he approached the

throne of grace with his prayers, and bowed his knees before the Saviour to be reconciled, enlightened and sanctified by His blood and Spirit. But, alas, it seems he does not obtain what he so much desires. The Lord seems to be afar off, not listening to his cry. A cloud seems to be cast over his mind. Jesus Christ does not reveal himself powerfully to his soul. His heart remains so insensible, his seeking refuge with God in Christ is so unsteadfast. His passions remain so turbulent. He falls so often into the same sins. The inquietude of his conscience does not stop. It seems as if he cannot obtain that true light, that power, that peace and tranquillity of the soul, which flow from the cross.

I must commence by asking such persons as Sincerus, whether it is indeed so certain as they imagine that they seek in vain? Could they affirm, in truth, that they are the same that they were before, in regard to their peace of conscience, their hope in God, their spiritual understanding, their state of heart, their power to control their passions, and that they are the same in regard to all this that they would be if they left off seeking after God, and turned again into their former ways of carelessness? I cannot believe this, as it is contradictory to the change which may be observed in their conduct; contradictory to the declarations of the Bible. "For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Luke xi. 10; see Luke xi. 10, 11, 12; Isaiah, lv. 7; John, vi. 37.

To many it may *appear* that they are seeking in vain; but for this we may name different reasons. By some, it is their little advancement in godliness; by others, ignorance in regard to the ways of God, who, for wise reasons, not always feels disposed to send his help the very moment we ask Him; by others, lastly, that they expect something which they never will receive, and not receiving this, leads them to the supposition that they seek in vain. The one desires such an overwhelming conviction of sin as to bring him to the brink of despair. A second expects a sudden enlarging of the heart, and such a revelation of Jesus to his soul, as no mortal man will experience. A third is eager to receive some sign, or to be favored by some heavenly vision or audible voice. Some again, suppose, that by becoming a renewed Christian, the depravity of their hearts must disappear of a sudden; others, that they will conquer their sins, the moment they approach the throne of grace. This they imagine to themselves; and when disappointed, they call it "seeking in vain." That we cannot expect such results, has been shown already, on different occasions.

It may be true, however, that many God-seeking men remain for a long time deprived of true quietude and strength, but this will prove, in most instances, to be their own fault. I will name here, *five* causes of this malady, and add thereto the proper remedies, as we go along.

The *first* cause why many God-seeking men, obtain

so little peace and strength, *is their law-abiding spirit.* They form to themselves, hard, mistrusting, and repulsive ideas, about God and Jesus. They pause at His holiness and justice, the demands of His law, and lose sight of the riches of God's grace, and the salvation through Jesus Christ. Thus they want first to reform themselves, before coming to God. And can we be astonished, if they succeed badly in their reformation, and live under constant and slavish fear of the law, discouraged, dejected, grieved, unconfident, and in enmity towards God, with a heart entirely closed for that cheerful love, which is the true source of willing and diligent obedience to God's commandments? If we have learned, on the contrary, that we must not seek our justification in the law, but that God is so gracious as to justify the sinner, freely, by the salvation in Jesus Christ, and that faith in His love is the source of reformation, that we obtain freedom to trust ourselves, sinful and depraved as we may be, to Jesus, and through Him to God the Father: then we behold in God, a friend and father. We are astounded by His love to sinners. This breaks and softens the heart, and fills it with that love and gratitude to God, which produces a delicate solicitude to please Him. Then disappears all slavish fear. Joy and calmness take their abode in the soul. And with this joy in God, we become more sensible to all that is noble and good, more attentive to our duties, and our inward depravity has, in that state, but little power over our spirit.

Therefore, Sincerus, *Try to dismiss all slavish fear of the law, and endeavor to think according to the glad tidings of the gospel.* Impress it upon your soul, that the calls, offers, and promises of the gospel are directed to sinners as they are, and that you, therefore, are invited and urged to trust yourself, as sinful and miserable as you are, to God, through Jesus Christ.

God-seeking persons obtain, *secondly*, but little peace and strength, *by trusting in their own strength.* This fault is closely connected with the former. Men who secretly suppose that their sanctification ought to precede their justification, and that they at least must reform themselves to a certain degree, before they can have the freedom to go confidently to God, undertake their reform generally, in their own strength, without seeking the true source of purification and improvement. Or, if they go to God, they build their confidence on the greater or smaller degree of reformation, and are very unsteadfast. And as we are too depraved, to be capable of sanctifying ourselves and conquering our depravity, so it is not astonishing, that such people do not succeed in curing themselves, and faint, and lose all hope of ever obtaining the object they seek. *Be on your guard, therefore, against this trusting in your own strength.* Do not undertake anything, exercise no duty, but in the strength of the Lord, confiding yourself to that Spirit of Christ which is mighty to strengthen the most feeble. Do this, even when your conscience labors under the conviction of guilt, remembering,

that the ground on which you may do this, is not your moral goodness, but the grace of God, the merits of Jesus, His promises and commandments.

A *third* cause is *attachment to their own will.* They wish to be led to salvation after their own plan. First, their sorrow for sin must attain a certain degree, then the fear must be changed for enlarging and rejoicing, which must be followed by a holiness that easily obeys God's commands, without necessity of fighting any longer the difficult fight of virtue. Many desire to be assured of the safety of their state before they believe in Christ, and ask constantly, "Is my work in truth? Is it a work of God?" They desire to know, therefore, beforehand, what can become evident by the consequences only. Others again are seduced by their own will to appoint the ways of prosperity and calamity, the circumstances and occasions which would be best for them, and by which they desire to be brought to God.

Still, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." They are different in regard to different people. One is brought to by a fearful conviction of sin, another by the tender voice of the gospel. One is first attracted by the sweetness and nobleness of the service of God, another by the love of the Saviour, who died for sinners, and calleth the lost to come to Him. In regard to external circumstances, God judgeth what is good for one, and what is good for another; and no doubt but the ways of God are always the best, or rather, *the only proper*, as He, the All-wise, knows our hearts

and our needs; whereas we, by our limited foresight, know not what we desire, and are very apt to be mistaken in our judgment of what may be profitable to us or not. Are we, however, determined to follow our own will, then God sometimes grants our foolish desire, of which we discover the foolishness too late, and we have to profit by our own loss; or does He not hear us, we create ourselves care, inquietude, dissatisfaction, and mistrust towards Him. And, therefore, Sincerus, if you would not seek in vain, *endeavor to mortify that attachment to your own will.* Go with this fault to the Saviour. Trust in Him, that He may lead you in His wisdom, and learn you first, what first you ought to know. Be presumptuous in nothing. Follow in every thing. Follow Jesus with the simplicity of a child, allow Him to lead you.

A *fourth* cause is the *impatience of many God-seeking men.* The Lord does not always show that He has heard our prayers the moment we ask, but often delays apparently to give us His help. Sometimes He appears still more severe, and it seems to man as if God had determined *not* to help him at all. Of this we find a beautiful example in the history of the woman of Canaan, in Matt. xv. This happens for reasons which are not less than proofs of the wisdom and lovingkindness of God; for His object is to make those that come to Him deeply feel their entire and absolute dependence on Him, to bring them to a better knowledge of themselves, to make them appreciate the more God's saving grace, to exercise them in faith and patience, and to make them

afterwards the happier in their consolation and joy. Nothing is, therefore, more reasonable than to wait patiently for the Lord, and to hope in His Word. But how is it with many? If they receive not immediately what they ask, they are apt to think that they will *never* receive. "God does not hear me now, so He will never hear." This makes them sometimes discouraged, unsteady in their ways of seeking God — perhaps they leave Him forever, and abandon themselves to murmuring impatience. Therefore, Sincerus, if you would not seek in vain, *be on your guard against this impatience, and continue to seek the Lord with perseverance and steadiness.* God is most positively the hearer of prayer, but nowhere has He appointed the time when He will show us that He heard us. Does the Saviour promise, (Luke xi. 9,) "Ask, and it shall be given to you," He adds in the same breath, "Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He recommends earnest and constant prayer. Consider this, and believe that God is faithful, and that it would be impossible for Him to forget His promises, although He may defer the fulfillment of them. Believe that He is wise, and therefore knows the most profitable moment to grant your desire. Seek with perseverance. Wait for the Lord with patience and resignation; plead His promises; hope in Him, even when all around you is darkness, and endeavor to act like the maker of Psalm cxxx., whose language was, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the

Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say more than they that watch for the morning."

A *fifth* cause, lastly, is that God-seeking persons not always *lay aside that which may hinder them from obtaining rest and strength.* Many seek the Lord in the way of his ordinances, but do not cease to partake of pleasures and conversation, which they know to be injurious to their hearts. Others will foster one particular sin, notwithstanding the often repeated warnings of conscience, and although hindered by them in their prayers; or they neglect to accomplish some great duty, though convinced that they ought to practice it. *One* sin, willingly and continually indulged, may hinder us from obtaining the rest and strength of the gospel; and nothing is, therefore, more necessary than to bid farewell to any amusement or conversation which could prevent us from attaining our object; and to guard ourselves from continuing even in *one* sin, or *one* neglect of duty, against the voice of reason and conscience.

## CHAPTER IV.

MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, WHICH PREVENT THEM FROM ATTAINING THAT DEGREE OF PERFECTION, WHICH IS TO BE FOUND ON EARTH.

### Section XXXV.

Introductory.

We have now advanced to the contemplation of the faults and spiritual maladies which are found among the true and pious friends of God and the Saviour. For order's sake, it will be well to divide this chapter into six *parts*, which will treat of these maladies, as they regard, firstly, *religious knowledge;* secondly, *faith;* thirdly, *sanctification;* fourthly, *perseverance and growth;* fifthly, *the fruits of faith and godliness;* and lastly, as they regard some *peculiar circumstances into which even advanced Christians may be brought.*

FIRST PART.—MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, WHICH RELATE TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF RELIGION.

### Section XXXVI.

A small degree of religious knowledge.

It cannot be denied, that many sincere friends of the Saviour possess but a limited knowledge of religion. Many of them rest satisfied with the superficial knowledge they have acquired; so in regard to

the doctrine of misery, salvation, and duty, as well as of experimental religion; and never trouble themselves, with any further search or study of the truths and doctrines of the gospel, the correct understanding of the Holy Scriptures, or meditations on the works and ways of God in Nature and Providence.

With some, this ignorance originates from excusable causes, as limited mental capacities, neglected education in regard to religious instruction in their childhood, or manifold necessary occupations. With others, however, this malady has different causes. Some do not at all perceive that a more extended religious knowledge is agreeable, profitable and necessary. Others call it uninteresting. Others again, go so far as to depreciate and condemn it; or are so wise in their own estimation that, taught of the Lord, all further advancing in knowledge would be useless to them. In others again, it is a dislike for study and any kind of literature, or too great a taste for worldly things, to ascend to the heavenly; whereas not a few cannot set sufficient time apart, from their daily occupations, pleasures, and social intercourse, for the reading of the Bible and other profitable books.

As knowledge, however, belongs to the practice of true Christianity and to our Christian growth, as we have shown, Vol. I., Secs. I. and VIII., it follows that the superficial knowledge of some, must be considered as an imperfection, a deplorable fault, which cannot but exercise an injurious influence on their faith, consolation and sanctification. Or how can we firmly believe in truths, which we but superficially know?

How can we derive true consolation from them; how can we experience their sanctifying power, without a thorough knowledge of these truths?

What is the reason, that in many upright Christians we still observe so much unbelief, unsteadiness, doubt and error? Why do so many remain deprived of true consolation, and the clear and joyful views of eternity? Whence so much coldness of love, so little fervent zeal to become holy as God is holy? Whence, if not from the want of sufficient knowledge of God and Jesus, and from every thing that relates to religion? By resting satisfied with a little share of knowledge, we debase ourselves, forgetting the superior rank we occupy above the beasts of the field. We deprive ourselves of the noble enjoyment, which is attached to our growth in knowledge; we render ourselves too little fit for Heaven, where the knowledge of God will form a great part of our happiness; and besides, we are not enabled to live as profitably to our fellow-men as we ought to do, and not seldom dishonor Christianity by the proofs of our ignorance.

"Brethren, be not children in undestanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. xiv. 20; Heb. vi. 1; 2 Pet. iii. 18. The means to cure ourselves of this ignorance, we have stated already in Sec. II. of this second volume. Allow me, however, to add the following words of advice. Let neither your social intercourse, nor even

the attendance of religious company, occupy so much of your time, as to deprive you of setting apart some hours of earnest solitude for the study of true wisdom. Should you foster any impression, that religious knowledge is not absolutely necessary, endeavor to find out how groundless such a prejudice is; and feel all the importance and interest, as well as the excellency and delight of religious knowledge. Never think that you know sufficient. Only half-learned people are able to think so. The more one knows, the more he perceives that he knows but little, compared to what remains to be acquired. The true Christian loves to be instructed. And is it not natural? He is humble, lowly-minded, *and receives the kingdom of God as a child.*

### Section XXXVII.

#### Depreciation of so-called "scholastic learning."

There are pious Christians, who put a very low estimate on all extended knowledge of religion, which is the fruit of study of the Bible, and the use of profitable books; who go even so far as to depreciate and condemn such knowledge. They value sufficiently the enlightening of the mind; but desire only to be enlightened by the Spirit, without the Word or its study, as if those two things could be separated. This illumination by the Spirit, they call, "to be taught by the Lord, and to get understanding by His own light." The knowledge, on the contrary, which a man acquires by means of the Word of God, they call "scholastic learning;" the Word itself a dead

letter, just as if the word of God were not His own light, which His Spirit uses to enlighten the mind. Diligent searching of the Bible, zealous striving after religious knowledge by the use of means, they consider of little value. They often say: "Plenty knowledge, but little practice. Rather seek to be enlightened by the Spirit, and act accordingly."

My dear Christians, who thus argue, allow me to speak a moment to you on this subject. I believe that your intentions are sincere and good. Let me tell you; you know people who have acquired much knowledge, but who do not live accordingly. They study, but not under prayer to God for the enlightening influence of His Spirit. They are indifferent about that knowledge which has a quickening and powerful influence on the heart. You do not like this, and you are perfectly right. The Saviour himself has warned us against this evil, when He said: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." In this sense you may say: *plenty knowledge but little practice.* For our practice the instruction of the Word is insufficient, unless assisted by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit. But in striving against this error, you fall into another extreme, which is not less erroneous. Let me show this. You say justly: the Holy Spirit must enlighten us. But herein lays your error, that you separate that *light of the Holy Spirit* from the *Word of God*, as though these two things were opposed to each other. Herein you are wrong, that you call this *light of the Spirit* exclusively, *to be taught of God;* just as if

God did *not* teach us through His Word, and as if this Word were not His own light. For as surely as the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit must enlighten our understanding, just as surely does it teach us that the Holy Spirit enlightens *through means of the Word*, and so works on the mind that it conceives *the truths which the Word has declared*, in all their consequences and with influence on the heart. Wherever therefore *enlightening by the Spirit* is found, there is enlightening *through the Word*, because the Spirit enlightens in that way. Is any taught by the Lord, he is taught by His Word and by His Spirit. To depreciate therefore the Word of God and its use, is the same as depreciating the great means which God has provided for our instruction; it is depreciating that Word, which in Holy Scripture is represented as the *seed of regeneration*, as *a power of God to salvation*, as a *source of consolation*, *a lamp before our feet*, *a light on our path.*

### Section XXXVIII.

Mis-directed zeal for knowledge, by which the practice loses more than it gains.

This malady is the opposite of the two foregoing. There are Christians who observe the ignorance of some of their pious fellow-Christians, disapprove of it, and wish to distinguish themselves by enlarging their store of religious knowledge. But what kind of knowledge do they seek for? Some exercise themselves in scholastic theology, spend their time in fruitless researches, or questions of curiosity, and

seek to get acquainted with all the heretical opinions, or theological differences that have ever taken place. Others have a taste for the most difficult places of Scripture, although they may be of no interest for their practice, or for the darkest prophecies and their fulfillment, or in the modes of typifying, allegorizing, and spiritualizing of former days.

In the meanwhile, the hearts of such men remain cold as marble with all their acquired learning. And can it be otherwise, as this knowledge is of a nature which leaves the heart empty, and is unfruitful of profitable effects in their conduct? Nothing is, therefore, more advisable to such Christians, than to change the kind of knowledge after which they seek.

But this alone is not sufficient. In applying for interesting knowledge, we must do so *with the right object*. Herein many fall short, as we may observe in the example of Lucius. Lucius applies himself with all diligence to true religious knowledge. He exercises himself in the knowledge of the Bible, the doctrine of faith and practice, morals, nature, Divine government, history, and so forth. He succeeds in his studies. He understands the Bible much better than before. He has received many clear views about difficult subjects. He has left off many prejudices. He has learned to think with much more distinction and judgment than heretofore. In short, nobody can deny that Lucius has advanced in all kinds of religious knowledge. But now let us look at his practice Alas, heretofore, with less knowledge

and less clear views, he was the earnest and sensitive man who always evinced a most tender conscience. And to-day? His heart appears to be less pious. He is less edifying in his conversation, less scrupulous in his expressions and in his doings, and more conformed to the world, so that he can allow many things to which before he would have objected. And what is the reason? Is knowledge unprofitable to practice? I will believe that Lucius has learned to use the Christian liberty, and finds no harm any longer in things which in former times he considered in his ignorance to be sin; but his piety is really languishing, and he cannot deny that he lived nearer to God in former times than at present. And why this? I think for this reason: in seeking after knowledge he has lost sight of the right object that he ought to have kept in view. In the beginning he thirsted after the enlightening of his mind, to become more pious of heart; but gradually he forgot this object, loved knowledge for its own sake, and his whole soul was captivated by it. He commenced pleasing himself in his knowledge. A fondness for glory became the secret spring of his exercises. Perhaps also I may add this: by his better insight he changed his former severe opinions for more liberal ones, a thing which is desirable if it remains within the proper bounds, but which, as soon as the desire for glory associates with it, easily abandons all that is old and ordinary, because it is old and ordinary, and embraces all that is new and strange, because it is new and strange. And how easily do

we thus become doubtful, even of those truths which are the pillars of virtue and piety!

Lucius, "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have no charity, I am nothing." Thus spoke the Apostle Paul. 1 Cor. xiii. 2. And may his language earnestly remind you, that knowledge has no value, if it has no influence on our heart and walk; that true knowledge must be quickening and powerful; and that without this, the greatest learning will prove of no avail. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John xiii. 17. O call the former days back to your memory. Answer to yourself: *Was it then not better with you, than now?* And is anything more necessary therefore, than to return to your former object: *to seek after knowledge in order to become more pious, more virtuous, more holy!*

SECOND PART.—MALADIES OF PIOUS CHRISTIANS, WHICH RELATE TO FAITH.

## Section XXXIX.

### Unsteady Faith.

This is the first malady of which we have to speak here. It is that indisposition of the soul, by which the Christian is not sufficiently impressed with the truths of religion, and therefore continually exposed to be attacked and moved by different objections,

considerations, and doubts. It is nothing strange, if thoughts like the following pass rashly through their soul, or take more or less hold of them; as these thoughts are supported by the objections of unbelief, which they are not always ready to refute: "Is there really a Jesus, who died for the reconciliation of sin, who is exalted to the right hand of God, and who will come to judge the world? Is there really a Holy Spirit, who enlightens and renews? Is the Bible divine? How difficult for me to decide! What! Is there a God, a Divine Providence? Is my soul immortal? Is not all that I believe imagination and superstition?"

We will easily perceive that this is a most pitiful malady, by remembering that faith in the truths of religion, is the only foundation of confidence in God and Christ, and of all consolation and holiness, which cannot take place where there is no faith. Is any thing to be compared, Christian, to the miserable darkness that hangs over your mind—to the oppressed, grieved, inconsolable state of heart, when doubts like these attack your soul, and keep you for some time under their influence? The question is then important: What are the causes of this malady, what its remedies? As it is possible that such attacks are the work of the prince of darkness, it becomes our duty to strive and to pray against them; but besides this there are different other causes, which we will now examine.

*Firstly.* That *small degree of religious knowledge*, of which we have complained in the *first part* of this

chapter, by which we expose ourselves to doubts of all kinds. A *first* remedy, therefore, is, *Apply yourself to a solid knowledge of the truth.*

A *second cause* is, that many persons *form to themselves erroneous ideas about the truths which they believe.* What impure, rude, wrong, and human conceptions, do we discover in men, for instance, in regard to the doctrine of reconciliation, the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Divine decrees, and others—conceptions which, in men of good natural understanding, must give occasion to doubt. As a *second remedy* we therefore say, "*Apply* yourself not only to a solid, but particularly to a *pure* knowledge of the truth."

A *third cause*, in others, is *that they do not sufficiently cherish the knowledge they once acquired.* In this way the grounds of their conviction become gradually fainter before their spirit. As a *third remedy*, I therefore earnestly recommend: Entertain, foster, and quicken the knowledge you have attained, by meditation, progressing study, and prayer to God to strengthen your faith, and to render you safe against the attacks of doubt.

A *fourth cause* is to be found in the *writings and conversation of unbelievers.* Alas, that there is such a number of books in the world which attack the religion of revelation, and even of nature! For although we do not read them ourselves, we always will meet with people, who are eager to proclaim such dangerous and erroneous doctrines to others. As a *fourth remedy* it is therefore well to use the necessary pre-

servatives against the influence of such writings and conversation. And what are these? It is safest not to read such books, and to avoid the company of men who wish to sow the seed of unbelief. But if you consider it your duty and calling to read such writings, do not undertake it without being provided with sufficient knowledge of the truth and of the weakness of the common oppositions against it; do this with love to the truth, and with prayer to God to judge aright, and to read with impartiality also what is written *against* such writings. Do you meet with some objections which you cannot at once solve, be not overcome by them, but remember your limited understanding, and take counsel with others. And further, as the Saviour has said, "By their fruits will ye know them," observe what kind of morality they possess, who direct their pointed pens against religion—observe whether their writings bear evidence of earnestness, virtue, love to the truth, and pure intentions — or whether their moral conduct must lead you to the belief that the truth is worth less to them than freedom to do evil, which they seek to create by their false doctrines—observe if you are not sustained in that belief by the *manner* in which they proclaim these sentiments; as they often resort to untimely wit, ridicule, and blasphemy, instead of adducing well-founded proofs for their arguments.

A *fifth cause* we must find *in the depravity of our hearts, by which we are inclined to error, if it favors our passions and lusts.* We easily believe all that agrees with our desires and passions. We reject with

the same facility any dogma which is opposed to our sinful dispositions, as pride, attachment to cherished sins, love to novelties, and such like. Nothing but sincere love of the truth can save us from this evil. That love of truth which does not ask what would be *agreeable* to us, but that seeks after it whether it suits our convenience or not, and acknowledges it wherever it is found. And, therefore, as a *fifth remedy*, *Endeavor to obtain more and more of that sincere love of truth*, by prayer to God for it, and by earnest meditation on the importance and benefit of truth.

*Lastly.* Another cause of our objection and doubt may be found in *the difficulty of sensual men believing in invisible things.* The soul is habitually informed by the senses of all that goes on without. This is the reason that we but slowly accept any thing that wants this sensible evidence. And as a *sixth remedy*, I would therefore say, "Assist your belief towards invisible things by considering how *reasonable* it is to believe in them, but, above all, by getting acquainted with the *experimental proofs* of their truth." I allude to those proofs which are not above the comprehension of the common understanding, and which are found in nature, history, or experience. For instance, if you have any doubts in regard to the existence, the perfections and providence of God, do not fatigue yourself with abstracted and high philosophical proofs, but "*lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things.*" Behold the invisible, divine attributes in all that is great and beautiful in visible nature. Regard the history of kingdoms and na-

tions—look into the history of your own life, and your doubts will disappear. If you have any objections or doubts in regard to the divine origin of the Bible, and the important truths it contains, make yourself acquainted with the experimental proofs which plead for it. Look at those prophecies whose fulfillment is still going on—at the prophecy of Jeremiah, that the Israelites would remain a people notwithstanding the fall of other nations—the prophecy of the Saviour in regard to the dispersion of this people among all nations of the earth—prophecies, the fulfilling of which you can behold with your own eyes every hour of the day. Look at the adaptation of the Bible doctrine to the state and wants of mankind; look at the powerful and blessed effects of this doctrine on the minds and hearts of men; look at the astonishing moral revolution it produced among Jews and heathen; at the power it still exercises to enlighten, convert, console, and reform; at the blessed effects you have often experienced and still experience of it in your heart; whereas all that reject the Bible give the most melancholy proofs of their growing depravity. A remedy which oft repeated trials has proved to work the desired effect, will be acknowledged and valued as *the true remedy*. And does it not follow that the Bible doctrine must be of God, as experience has proven that it effects such results as human wisdom in its highest degree of excellency has not been able to produce?

### Section XL.

Little faith in the Divine truths in regard to ourselves, or want of assured confidence.

This is a second malady in regard to faith. By *assured confidence*, I do not allude to the *assurance* of an advanced Christian, as to his state of grace, for of this we will speak hereafter; but of that confidence in regard to external objects, in regard to Divine declarations and promises, in regard to God and Jesus, by which we trust in those promises, and seek refuge for ourselves in God and Jesus, with freedom, with firm confidence, and full assurance that our expectations will not be in vain. Heb. x. 19-23; Eph. iii. 12; Heb. iv. 16; Rom. iv. 20, 21.

Christians of *little faith* miss that confidence. They accept the declarations and promises of God in the gospel as the truth; but as soon as they commence applying these truths to themselves, they miss that full assurance of conviction by which to rely upon these Divine declarations with unwavering confidence. It is as if they cannot get rid of a secret fear that it may perhaps turn out differently from what the Bible affirms. They believe in Christ as the only and perfect Saviour; but their exercises, in regard to Him, exist more in acknowledging Him, in wishing, desiring, seeking, praying, hoping, than in firmly trusting in Him, and relying confidently on his salvation, power, faithfulness, and love. They come to God through Christ; but more with sentiments of fear, care, and secret distrust in His gracious inten-

tions in their behalf, than with that boldness and confidence, through faith in Christ, which Paul required of the Ephesians, and with that spirit of a child by which we say, *Abba, Father!* Daily they commend all their interests to God in prayer; but to commit their life and lot entirely to His fatherly wisdom and love, even when their faith is put to trial, or when circumstances seem to make the fulfilling of God's promises impossible; to trust, when all around them is darkness, this is a degree of faith which they have not attained.

Believers of this class resemble still too much those persons who are desirous to come to God through Jesus, but who, for different discouraging considerations, are still hindered from obtaining true rest and strength for their souls, whom we have described in Chapter III. They differ, however, from them in this respect, that they are not *hindered* from coming to God, for they trust in God and Jesus with sincerity, but with much fear and solicitude. As their disease, although in feeble degree, is the same on which we dwelt in the said *third Chapter*, I refer them back to those pages, where their different discouraging considerations are analyzed, and the remedies given against this malady. O, let them not rest satisfied with their little faith, but strive with all diligence and earnestness after that full and childlike confidence which glorifies God, promotes the joy of the soul, and imparts power and strength to true godliness.

### Section XLI.

Impure faith, or faith which is mixed up with erroneous ideas and conceptions.

Among these I count, first,

A. *A misconception of the nature of sincere faith*, which occasions much confusion, and exercises an injurious influence on practice.

Many suppose that faith consists in a certain knowledge or determination that we have already part in the salvation through Christ, and that we surely will go to heaven. By the following remarks, we will see, however, that *faith*, by which we *will be* saved, does not consist in such a conviction.

The objects of faith, according to the gospel, are not *ourselves*, and our part in salvation, but these objects are *divine declarations in regard to God and Jesus*, which we have to accept, and which must direct our exercises.

When Paul and Silas spoke to the keeper of the prison, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," they certainly did not intend to say: "Rest convinced that you are already happy through Jesus Christ;" but, "Accept Jesus Christ as your true Saviour and Lord, and act towards Him in accordance with this acceptance."

Again: The gospel says, "Whosoever believeth, shall have eternal life." If we thus resolve that we have already part in the salvation through Christ, and surely shall inherit eternal life, we must be conscious that we believe. The confidence of our in-

heriting eternal life is the *consequence* of our faith, *not faith itself.* How absurd, moreover, *to be saved*, simply by resolving in our mind *that we are saved already.* An example will illustrate this the better. Many sick persons were healed by Jesus. Of these we read that they believed in Jesus, and thereby secured their recovery. Did the faith of these people exist herein, that they were confident that their maladies were cured; that they were already hearing, and seeing, and walking? That would have been ridiculous. But herein consisted their faith, that they accepted it as the truth that Jesus was mighty and willing to heal them of their infirmities, and that therefore they made Him the object of their confidence and refuge.

B. *A law-abiding spirit.* It is not likely that a believer can be found who seeks his justification in the obedience of the law of Moses, and who fears its curses in trespassing that law; but law-abiding Christians form to themselves hard and terrifying thoughts of God and Jesus; they pause much longer at God's justice than at His mercy, as declared by the gospel; much longer at the severe requirements and curses of the law, than at the salvation through Christ and the promises of grace to poor and needy sinners. They think the gospel ought not to be preached to every creature, although this is the Saviour's positive commandment, but, as they call it, to qualified sinners, who are truly alarmed over their sins, and broken of heart. That is, they confound the doctrine of God's decrees with the offer of salvation. According to

their notions, these offers are only made to God's elect.

But how will the minister of the Gospel separate them? How can they separate themselves, before they believe in Christ? They answer: "By some evidences of grace," namely, "when a person feels exceedingly alarmed over his sins." And in order not to be deceived by appearances, they give a number of evidences of genuine alarm, in which some even go so far, as to require such terrible agonies of a reproaching conscience, such fears of Hell, as approach despondency and despair. "Persons in this state," they say, "may consider this the work of God; to them the gospel may be preached; they may find in these affections of their heart, the true grounds of their right and freedom of coming to Jesus." That such opinions are entirely opposed to the manner in which Jesus and His Apostles have preached, I have fully shown already in Sec. XXVII. and XXX., to which I therefore beg to refer.

To this law-abiding Spirit is, *thirdly*, closely connected.

C. *The mistake of grounding our freedom and confidence on affections or former experience, and not on the gospel.* Men of this opinion seek refuge in Christ and the grace of God in Him, with a confidence which is proportioned to the degree of their *sensibility* of sin, their desire for forgiveness and healing and the *passionate affections* which this desire may produce. When they feel that these affections of the heart grow faint, they endeavor to remember the way

in which they were converted, and build their present confidence on the experience of former days. This misunderstanding naturally follows from the error which we contemplated in the former Sections. For if the gospel comes only to much alarmed sinners, then it follows that our freedom and confidence in coming to God through Jesus Christ, must be based on our present passionate feelings, or on the former experience of them. This, however, is altogether erroneous. We must make a proper distinction. If it is the question: Have I already put on Christ? Am I already a Christian in truth? Then it depends on the sentiments we discover in our hearts, and which, as we will see hereafter, are named by the Bible as evidences of faith and a renewed Spirit.

But is the question: Have I ground of confidence to accept Jesus as my Saviour, and to go through Him confidently to the throne of grace? Then the converted or unconverted need not think of sentiments or evidences of grace; for both have to come as sinners to receive *freely*, all that they need, in the first beginning or in their Christian growth, by the grace of God. The declarations of the gospel, as we have seen, Section XXVII. and XXX. are general, and O Christians, it is necessary to remember this constantly. Do you not experience on what unsteady ground you are building by establishing your confidence on your own feelings? Are you of good cheer, is your heart light and animated? Then you have much courage and confidence; but are you differently situated, then also all ground of confidence disappears. Sometimes

you may console yourself with the remembrance of your former conversion, but you will not always succeed. O, how much better is it therefore to look at the unlimited and general invitations and declarations of the gospel, which are addressed *to all sinners*. This is the steadfast and never changing ground, under all circumstances and feelings, on which you may confidently come to Jesus, and trust in the grace of God through Him.

D. *More confiding ideas about the Son of God than of God the Father.* We often meet with sincere believers who form much kinder ideas of the Lord Jesus Christ than of God the Father, and who approach the Son with more confidence than they address the Father, in whom they behold as it were the judge who is moved to compassion by the Son. How wrong! What human ideas! The Father was not moved to compassion by Jesus, but Christ has occasioned, by the work of salvation, that God could act towards sinners *according to His infinite love, which dwells in Him from all eternity*, without impairing His perfections. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Son." John iii. 16. The love of God is considered in the Bible as the first origin of all the salvation in Jesus. All that He did was "according to the will of God and our Father." Gal. i. 4. He himself was a gift of God, a gift of His love. Besides, He is the image of the invisible God. In the loveliness of Jesus we behold the loveliness of the Father.

E. *Erroneous idea of some, who conclude their*

*prayers in the Saviour, without going through Him to the Father.* Some pious Christians who form much kinder ideas of the Saviour than of God the Father, make the Lord Jesus Christ almost the only object of their religious exercises. To Him they approach in their prayers. With Him they seek forgiveness and renewing. To Him they commend all their interest. To Him they address their thanksgivings for their salvation; but in Jesus also they conclude their prayers, without going through the Mediator to the Father. They do not pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Lord, must undoubtedly be the object also of our refuge and adoration. For this plead, 1st. His Divine nature, 2. His power as Mediator on earth and in heaven, 3. The nature of faith in Him, which includes our seeking refuge and having confidence in Him; and 4. The examples of Stephen, Paul, and the primitive Christians in general. It is inconceivable that a person who believes in the Divinity of Jesus, and in His dominion as Mediator, can doubt for a single moment in regard to our obligation of addressing the Saviour in our prayers. But on the other hand, it is just so astonishing that Christians should make Christ the *only* object of their supplications and thanksgivings, without approaching the Father, because it is entirely in opposition to the doctrine of the gospel.

For, *firstly.* The gospel contains declarations in regard to the Father as well as in regard to the Son; declarations in regard to Him as the Creator, the

Ruler, and as gracious in Christ; which we must believe and accept, and which must constrain us to adore Him.

*Secondly.* We owe to Jesus Christ full redemption through His blood, and He reigns as our Mediator; but we must never forget that *all these things are of God.* "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen." 2 Cor. v. 18; Rom. xi. 31. See Eph. i. 3. The honor we render to Jesus must be to the glory of God the Father. We must give thanks to God the Father by Jesus Christ. See Col. iii. 17; Rom. xvi. 27.

*Thirdly.* The salvation through Jesus Christ has precisely for its object the bringing of us to God. "For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." 1 Pet. iii. 18; Heb. x. 19–22; 1 Pet. i. 21; Eph. i. 12.

And is it necessary to remind you, *fourthly,* of the positive commandments to pray to the Father, as Jesus has taught us to pray: *Our Father which art in Heaven?* is it necessary to speak here of so many saints who, like the Apostle Paul in his epistles, have left us herein their example that we should follow it?

PART THIRD.—OF SOME MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS, IN RELATION TO SANCTIFICATION.

## Section XLII.

### Lukewarmness about sanctification.

By *sanctification* I understand the training of ourselves to true evangelical virtue, or to the direct practice of the duties which we have to perform, according to the gospel, towards God, ourselves, and our fellow-men; and by lukewarmness *about* sanctification, I do not understand a total indifference in this regard, for this is incompatible with true piety, but "a want of zeal in respect to this important subject."

Pious men, who suffer from this malady, intend no doubt to add to their faith virtue, but they do not undertake it with that warmth and zeal which the importance of the case requires. They are earnestly engaged in gaining self-knowledge, sincere faith, and assurance of their salvation; but they are cooler, they feel less interested about their becoming more pure and holy; to do more good and less evil. It is as if this might concern them less, as if it did not so exactly belong to the way of salvation.

We may recognize this malady by different signs.

*Firstly.* By carelessness in their conduct, by which they stand far below other pious men who let their light shine.

*Secondly. Such persons speak very little on this subject.* They love to converse on the knowledge of our depravity, on the way of salvation, on the grounds

of consolation under different circumstances; but on the duties of gratitude, and how we have to walk to please God, are themes which they seldom or never will touch.

*Thirdly. They dislike the true preaching of morals.* I say on purpose, *true* preaching of morals. For there is a kind of moral-preaching which every one who truly loves the Saviour must dislike, a preaching by which little or nothing is said about the Saviour, or the salvation through His blood; and which treats of the practice of duty to encourage men to obtain in this way the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. But when ministers of the gospel, faithful to their calling, not only preach faith in Christ, but also conversion to God and the duties which it includes, each in its proper time; when they derive these duties from the true principles of the gospel; when they enforce them by evangelical reasons; when they show to their hearers the true gospel-means to assist them in the practice of these duties; when they do this in a manner that there is unction in their address; and when then still people can decline such preaching and say with contempt: *it was but a sermon on morals!* O, we then behold but a melancholy proof, that they possess but little desire or interest for holiness of heart and of walk.

Allow me, my friend, who labors under this malady, to show you the evil and danger of it, as well as the necessity of getting cured of it.

Your lukewarmness about sanctification is unreasonable and punishable. Can you deny that the

Bible is full of earnest lessons and exhortations to virtue and piety? And what are these but commandments of the great God, given to you? And is it not very unreasonable for you, a Christian, to have so little zeal in regard to what God earnestly and repeatedly commands? The more so as God, who commands it, is your Creator, Lord and benefator, whose commandments are built on right and equity? To be but little concerned about holiness and virtue, does that correspond with the great object of salvation, which is no other than *that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love?* Does this agree with the plan of redemption in which everything is arranged to make us partakers of the Divine holiness? Do you thus return the love of God the Father who gave His Son for you, the unsearchable love of Christ who died for you, the instruction and influence of the Holy Spirit? Is it for this that God opened your eyes and arrested you in your way? O my friend, sin is condemnable in any person, but in none less pardonable than in a Christian! In a Christian, whose understanding is enlightened, for whom so much has been done, and whose awakened moral sense plainly tells him what he has to do or to deny; in a Christian, in whom God's compassion and grace in Christ Jesus have been glorified, and whose careless conduct, above that of anybody else, gives occasion to corrupt others, and causes that the name of God and Jesus be dishonored and blasphemed!

This lukewarmness about sanctification is not only

unreasonable and punishable, but very injurious to yourself. It is true, we are justified by faith; but this faith shows itself in our works, and the man therefore who is careless about them, has much reason to distrust the genuineness of his faith. By indulging in sin you cause yourself the bitter consequences which inseparably follow it, and the positive proofs of God's dissatisfaction from which He does not excuse even His children. By indulging one sin you will have less power to combat others. Your heart will condemn you in your approaching God. You rest deprived of the advantages and blessings of a holy life. While on earth you banish heaven out of your heart, and the consequences extend even unto the world to come; for *he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly.*

The causes and remedies of this lukewarmness in regard to sanctification, are the same as of entire *indifference* about it, or of that abuse of the doctrine of God's grace, by which we make Christ a servant of sin; of which I have spoken in Section XVI. and to which I therefore beg to refer.

I wish to add however a few remarks. Among the causes of this malady must also be brought *a too high estimate of the first work of conversion.* Some persons, after much alarm and anxiety about their sins, come in sincere and calming faith to Jesus, and return to God, with humble confession of sin, and the upright determination of serving Him. But now they suppose themselves to be entirely transformed, renewed, just as if they needed not to be

transformed and renewed daily more and more. This erroneous idea renders them less zealous to finish their sanctification in the fear of God. They are truly converted. This seems to be sufficient. They regard it more important therefore to remember their way of conversion, than to proceed courageously in that road in the strength of the Lord! What is however more contradictory to the Bible than this!

Conversion may express, in a limited sense, that sincere repentance which is the beginning of a new life; but conversion includes, in a more extended sense, according to the Bible, the entire reformation of life, in which the Christian has to persevere until the hour of death.

Another *cause* may be found in the *losing sight of the doctrine of the gracious rewarding of good works, and of God's holy displeasure in the misconduct of His believing children.* It is right to reject the idea of proudly relying on the merits of our good works. But it is wrong to lose sight of the doctrine above named, for fear of falling into the last error. For this doctrine is most undoubtedly true, and the neglecting of it cannot but prove very injurious to our sanctification.

The thought that the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ, are pleasing to God, and glorify His holy name, and the expectation of recompenses, which God will award us by His grace, cannot fail to encourage us to the practice of virtue and good works; the same as the belief that God cannot overlook sin, even in His believing children, but that He will show

them His dissatisfaction, is another powerful motive to deter us from doing evil.

Be on your guard, therefore, to put this doctrine aside, remembering the words of the Apostle Peter: "If ye call on the Father who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

### Section XLIII.

#### Tendency to passiveness.

This is another malady which affects the spiritual life of many sincere believers. They are zealous to become truly holy in heart and walk, but still they are too apt to expect this passively from God.

They have erroneous ideas of human inability, and of the workings of the Holy Spirit. They believe, and correctly, that man left to himself is unable to do truly good works, and therefore needs the working of the Holy Spirit; but they believe this in regard to themselves in such a manner as to lose sight altogether of what they have already received towards a godly life and of the Divine assistance which is promised them, and which they will obtain by believing, praying, and working. They believe, and correctly, that the Holy Spirit must work in believers all that is truly acceptable to God; but they understand this as if the Holy Spirit had to work in them in an *immediate* manner, without binding them to some means; as if He did not require that they should work themselves and use those means to promote their sanctification. They look only to what God does to man;

whereas they neglect, at the same time, what God requires us to do ourselves, according to His commandments. It is therefore natural that such people feel but little disposed to exercise themselves actively, and to grow in holiness and well-doing. They feel inclined rather to await inactively all good dispositions and gifts of grace from God. Are they badly disposed, they mourn; they complain; but they rest in their complaints. They fervently desire it might be differently, but say, "*it is the gift of God*," instead of using, in the strength of the Lord, what He has already given to them, and actively engaging with humble confidence in the Divine help which has been promised to them.

The causes of this malady may be found in, 1st, the abuse of the doctrines of our inability and the working of the Holy Spirit, by not considering them in their true connection with other truths of the Bible; 2d, the erroneous ideas of some pious people in this respect, who are zealous to preach them to their fellow-men; which, 3d, meet readily with a hearing ear, on account of the slowness of our depraved nature, to which such ideas of passiveness cannot but be very welcome.

The erroneousness of such opinions I have sufficiently shown in Sections XVII., XVIII., and XIX. of Vol. I.; the necessity of getting cured of it we will readily admit, as it deprives us of all encouragement to the enploying of means to progress, and to grow in the practice of holiness and virtue, by undermining our Christian growth; and, on the contrary, exposes

us to all the dangers of inactivity, sloth, and negligence.

O, may the Bible doctrine, in regard to our inability, and as to what God worketh in us, preserve us from trusting proudly in our own strength, and fill us with a humble sense of our dependency, and lead us to give God the honor of all the good we may perform; but let it never bring us to condemnable passiveness and inactivity! The promises of Divine assistance must engage us to seek a powerful help in prayer, and, relying and trusting in those promises, find us active in the practice of all that God has commanded us to do. We must act in regard to Divine assistance, and the promises of that assistance, as the Israelites did in a somewhat similar circumstance. The Israelites had to fight and to conquer the Canaanites. In themselves, they had not sufficient strength to accomplish this; but their strength remained in *God their strength*, and in the promise, "I will be with thee." In accordance with this promise, they must *not* proudly rely on their own strength, *neither*, discouraged by their own inability, cease from doing what God had commanded them; no, they had but to look to the promise, "I will be with thee," and trusting in that promise, courageously fight against the Canaanites. Thus they had sufficient strength, and the most happy result crowned their active efforts.

### Section XLIV.

Separation of religion from our daily domestic and social duties.

The practice of true Christian virtue remains defective with many believers, on account of some erroneous ideas they have formed as to wherein this virtue really consists. I will only mention here one of the principal misconceptions by which some sincere Christians depreciate the practice of such duties as we have to fulfill in our daily occupations, in our domestic and social position. They regard the fulfilling of those duties as morally good and commendable, but not as belonging directly to religion. They think it of little consequence to be more or less negligent about these duties, if they are only pious in other respects. This is the reason that they expose themselves often to reproof by transgressing in this regard, whereas, at the same time, we may find them most scrupulous in the exercise of such duties as relate more directly to God and His service, or the denial of the world.

Negligentia is the wife of a worthy husband, and mother of several children, but neglects, from piety, the several duties which in both relations she is called to fulfill. She spends a long time in her bedchamber, never neglects public worship on Sunday or week-days—attends with punctuality the prayer-meetings, and gives the other evenings to religious conversation among her pious friends. She corresponds much on religious subjects, and is often from home in order to sow some good seed in the families of her acquaint-

ance. But to take proper care of her household; to interest herself for the education of her own children, is separated, according to her views, from that pious life to which she has consecrated herself in all sincerity of heart. These are, in her estimation, but worldly concerns, which she leaves to those who are less heavenly-minded than she is. The consequence is, that by want of diligence, order, and economy, by negligence, absence from home, in one word, that by being the opposite of the pious woman, as drawn by Solomon, (Prov. xxxi.,) her household is ruined, and her children bear all their days the marks of a neglected education.

Iracunda does not possess a very happy temper. Anger, peevishness, ambition, censoriousness, were the faults to which she mostly inclined, even from her childhood. She is changed, however, much for the better, and gives such proofs of a pious state of heart that people feel not disposed to blame her. But these faults of her temper are far from being mortified. She renders life disagreeable to every member of her household. Her husband suffers much. Her children tremble before her, but do not love her. Sometimes her treatment towards the servants is more than harsh. The least thing can put her into a passion. To-day she has to scold at this, to-morrow at something else. "Is that a pious Christian?" is the question which arises in the mind of those that witness her ill temper at home; and never is it so calm in her house as when she is absent. Iracunda lives under the erroneous impression that the duties

of affability, kindness, discretion, and mutual love, towards the members of the family are of less consequence, and have little or nothing to with religion.

Against such opinions I must remark, in the *first* place, *that they are in direct contradiction with the nature of the work which God has given us to do.* We are placed in this world not only to live for heaven, but also to answer here on earth the Divine purposes; to sustain the world, and to promote the happiness of our fellow-men, and the honor of God and Jesus. Husbands and wives, parents, the statesman, the minister, the lawyer, the physician, the officer, the merchant, the artist, the tradesman, the laborer, all have their peculiar work and occupation in the position in which they are placed. That is, the work of God which is given them to do. The Lord calleth us to the least as well as to the greatest. But if a man does that daily work as to the Lord, though he be engaged in the most humble labors of his occupation or household, he does the work of God in his own circle. So closely is faithfulness in our daily work connected to religion.

*Secondly. To separate the duties of religion from the duties of our domestic and social position, is contradictory to the object which the first have in view.* What is the object of our reading, prayers, churchgoing, and so on? Certainly not to benfit God, but to benefit ourselves, and to render us more fit for the fulfilling of the duties of our daily work to which Divine Providence calls us, which object is entirely

neglected by the erroneous opinion which we are now contesting.

*Lastly*, this opinion *is contradictory to the positive lessons and declarations of the gospel.* The gospel of Christ commands not only godliness and temperance, but also justice, faithfulness, love, meekness, readiness to help, to forgive, to console; industry, economy, order; duties for every class of society; to give to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, &c. How decisive is the declaration of Paul, Rom. xiv. 17, 18. For this reason the best Christians make the best members of society. For this reason Zacheus ceased to be an unrighteous publican, and Onesimus, who, until he became a Christian, had been very unprofitable to Philemon, turned to be very profitable to him and to Paul. Let me conclude this subject by quoting a passage from Luke iii. 12-14: "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him (John the Baptist) Master, what shall we do? And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, and what shall we do?" And what did John answer? To the publicans he said: "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" and to the soldiers he said: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." His meaning was, that they ought to prove the renewing of their heart by their faithfulness in the duties of daily life.

PART FOURTH.—A MALADY IN REGARD TO OUR CHRISTIAN GROWTH.

## Section XLV.

### Backsliding.

A Christian must not only possess knowledge, faith, and holiness; but he must grow, advancing in these things. This is not always the case. Some on the contrary go backward in the path of life. This sickness may be called backsliding in grace, or a state of relenting and slackening in what is good.

That such a spiritual malady may find place in the pious, we may see by the exhortations in God's Word which suppose the possibility of such a malady, as, 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Heb. xii. 12, 17; also, in examples in the Bible as that of David, 2 Sam. xii; and of the church at Ephese, Rev. ii. 4; and lastly, by experience, which makes us observe a state of backsliding in some friends of God and His service, whose former zeal has changed to deplorable coolness.

Now a person may, growing in self-knowledge, discover more and more faults, and appear to himself as if he was going backward, when it is not the case. Of this we do not speak. Neither is it backsliding if a man does not feel those strong sensations which he experienced after his first returning to God, and which are often occasioned by the newness of the objects that engage our mind and heart. The sentiments of the heart, the desire to live to God, may nevertheless be exactly the same as we can observe in old and confirmed Christians. But what I under-

stand by this *backsliding*, I will endeavor to show in the following lines. In such a Christian, the "one thing needful" seems to lose its interest. His former zeal and desire to read God's Word, to pray, to attend public worship, in short, to use the means of grace, is vastly fainting away, falling off. His private religion, heretofore his holiest delight, has become less desirable to his soul. He finds easily an excuse to postpone it. His prayers become more formal, and sometimes all desire for prayer has left him. Gradually he withdraws from the society of the pious, and returns more to the circles of the world. In general he is less watchful to evade temptations and occasions for sin. His spirituality has suffered by it. In knowledge he goes more back than forward. Sometimes his mind is covered with a gloomy darkness. He lives not any longer under those vivid impressions of godly things as heretofore. His faith is attacked and is weakened and trembling. Heretofore he had no occasion to ask whether Jesus and salvation was dear unto him, his heart's answer was always ready. And now—O how *his love has waxed cold!* How often does he feel as if he could do without salvation and grace! And in regard to the fulfilling of his duties, his heart is less filled with the fear of God, his passions disturb him more and gain in power. His conversation becomes less profitable and edifying. His life is less examplary. His transgressions are augmenting. He is more careless in the fulfillment of his duties, more slow in well-doing, more inclined to evil, and when he has

sinned, less sorry for it, and can easily remain for some time in sin, instead of returning instantly with humble penitence to God in Christ Jesus.

Perhaps some of my readers has found in the above sketch his own likeness; and if so, my poor friend, allow me to speak for a moment to your conscience, and let it declare whether you acted right or wrong. You are striving against the will and object of God, who intended your spiritual growth. You have disappointed the work of His grace towards you. You have grieved your fellow-Christians. You have offended others and spread a bad report over the road to heaven. Your conduct was not only unbecoming, it was dangerous. What must be the consequences if your malady trouble you so little that you neglect seeking for a remedy! Sin will exercise more and more power over you. God knows whereto it may lead you. O do not abuse the consolatory doctrine of Divine preservation. That doctrine is true, but not less true is the declaration of Jesus: "The love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Matt. xxiv. 12, 13. Not less true is the solemn threatening which we read in the 10th chapter of Hebrews, 23–32.

Impress that warning language upon your soul, and beware that you do not go astray from the living God, nor become hardened by the temptations of sin.

For after all, my friend, is your present conviction so agreeable, so preferable? O compare your present

loss, your want of consolation, the darkness and oppression of your soul, by former days, when, living continually with God, you enjoyed all the happiness and consolation of His presence. Tell me, did you not feel better in those days than now? O yes, you will remember it, in this hour, what joy your heart formerly experienced in God; you will remember the places and times that Heaven descended into your soul. O may your desire for that former happiness awake in your bosom! *Should we fall and not rise again?* Go astray and not return? Over *your* return, also, there will be joy in Heaven! It is still the voice of God that speaks to you. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you," "I will heal thy backslidings." Can you hesitate any longer to answer: "Here I am, O Lord, I come to Thee. Truly in the Lord our God is our salvation!"

To secure your recovery there is *one remedy*, which must be applied *instantly*. It is a *solemn and direct humiliation before, and return to God;* a humiliation whereby, after earnest and solemn meditation in solitude, on your present mournful condition, and the greatness of your guilt, you fall down before the throne of grace, encouraged by the riches of God's pardoning love in Christ and by the unchangeableness of His faithfulness; confessing with deep humility and shame your going astray from Him; seeking with Him forgiveness in the blood of Christ, and healing through the power of His Holy Spirit; and taking the resolution, in dependence upon God, to live again with your former zeal in His presence, and

consecrating yourself anew in a solemn manner to God and His holy service.

Besides this great and principal remedy, there are some more which we have to use *constantly*, and which we will discover by looking at the different causes by which the backsliding is produced.

The causes of backsliding are distinct in different Christians. With one it is *one great sin*, as with David, that disturbs the whole state of the heart; with others, *that condescension towards smaller sins*, which undermines unobservedly the whole being of the soul; in a third, *spiritual pride*, that despises and severely judges others, but that also *goes before destruction;* in others again, *carelessness and easiness on the safety of their state;* or *want of watchfulness against the first principles of neglecting the use of the means of grace*, which produces a greater negligence, and by which God withdraws himself from us with His holy influence. Often, also, it happens that *the change of station and society*, occasioned by marriage, riches, removal, etc., exercises a most pernicious influence on the spiritual condition of the Christian.

And his case is still aggravated when, with this, *he tries to persuade himself that he does not go backward*, by accepting wrong evidences of piety, and defending his backsliding by the name of liberal views of religion; the malady grows worse in proportion as it troubles us less.

From these remarks, my friend, flow the following lessons, which, under God's blessing, may serve to overcome your deplorable slackening in doing good.

Take the resolution to watch, looking unto God, against sin, even against such as seem of little consequence. Be on your guard against pride and careless easiness, and let the state of spiritual backsliding wherein God has suffered you to fall, become a lesson to you never to be forgotten; to look never proudly down upon others, but to walk henceforth in all humility before God and man. Return without delay to those religious services where God is to be found, and do this with all that interest which characterized you in former times. *Pray without ceasing* to God, that in using the means He provided, He may *return unto you* with His blessing, Spirit and grace. Be now above all, watchful against the first principles of backsliding; remember the painful lesson you have received. Have your circumstances changed, endeavor to know the temptations which await you; and watch, strive and pray against them; and in proportion as your position in society obliges you to deal with the evil and wicked, so try to find a counterbalance in an intimate acquaintance with the true friends of God and religion. And have you lent already a hearing ear to false and erroneous ideas of piety and virtue and religious liberty, behold those ideas again from all sides with an impartial eye. Behold them, with prayer to God, in the light of eternity; and may the thought of that eternity take away from you all vain excuses, and make you keep your loins girded and your lamps trimmed, so that the Lord may find you ready and watching when He comes!

PART FIFTH.—MALADIES OF BELIEVING CHRISTIANS IN REGARD TO THE FRUITS OF FAITH AND GODLINESS.

## SECTION XLVI.

### Of sadness, or want of joy and peace in the soul.

"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Jesus promises rest for the soul to all that come unto him. And still how many are there to be found who miss that true rest and calmness! How many who experience but little of the consolation of forgiveness, and of the blessed peace with God in their heart; and who instead of enjoying contentment, and living cheerfully and satisfied, on the contrary, pass their days in sorrow and sadness, to which their countenance, their manners and words often bear evidence! I do not speak of that exalted joy and extacy of which some can speak that are of a sensitive constitution and a vivid imagination. This is not given to every man. Such affections are not necessary to our happiness. They are generally like the lightning, which disappears the moment we perceive it. But I refer to that peaceful calmness of the soul, that tranquil joy, which although not so violent, lasts much longer.

From where, my mourning Christian, from where this sadness? A *first cause* of this sadness in some Christians, is to be found in a *languishing practice of all that Christianity requires;* in other words, in the same maladies in regard to knowledge, faith and sanctification, which we have already contemplated.

One is not sufficiently Christian; acts not sufficiently as a Christian; he must therefore miss much of the pleasant fruits of knowledge, faith and piety, and often taste the bitter fruits of ignorance, unbelief, and sin. This is the reason why the fountain of Christian joy flows but sparingly. But behold, therefore, this *first remedy* against sadness: *Apply yourself with all diligence to attain a high degree of knowledge, faith, and holiness.* In proportion as you go back or forward, will be your sadness or joy.

A *second reason*, which flows from the first, is the *want of assurance of our state of grace.* This deprives us of the joy in God and the hope of eternal life. Nothing is therefore more necessary to a cheerful life than to seek earnestly after the *assurance* of which we will speak in the following section.

But we must not forget mentioning here a *third cause* of sadness in some Christians, namely, their physical constitution. There are Christians who fear the Lord in all sincerity, yea, even surpass therein many others, and who are still generally melancholy. Is it not plain that the cause of their malady rests almost exclusively in the body and not in the soul? Our temper, our nervous system, the health or indisposition of the body, all exercise an astonishing influence on the joy or melancholy of the soul. How many poor sufferers could we find, who by deep melancholy, have almost excluded themselves from society, and whose sickness is caused by bodily weakness, constipation, or derangement in the nervous system.

How deplorable are sometimes the consequences of a fright, which at the first moment was disregarded. And if I have herein described your case, my mourning friend, consider well the cause of your sadness. Ascribe your malady to your body, and not to moral causes of which you are guilty, and still less to the displeasure of your Heavenly Father, as if He had left you. No, resist that melancholy by a proper use of exercise, recreation, and amusement, and of all the means which your physician may advise you.

In conclusion, my Christian friend, whatever may be the cause of your sadness, meditate often on the manifold good that God has given you to enjoy, and the great cause for rejoicing which the pious man really possesses. Remember that God is the *God of hope*, who is able "to fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Rom. xv. 13. Pray often as David prayed in the 51st Psalm: "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit." Every thing must constrain you to be joyful. Your kind Heavenly Father will be served with gladness. You are encouraged to do so by His holy Word. "Serve the Lord with gladness. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Psalm c. 2; Phil. iv. 4. It is your duty towards God, because He does so much to render you happy; towards your *fellow-men*, in order to inspire them with joyous ideas of true piety and godliness; towards *yourself*, because nothing is more agreeable; it is your duty, because gladness and joy exercise a

blessed influence on our holiness of heart and conversation. "The joy of the Lord is our strength!"

### Section XLVII.

A Christian's doubtfulness about his state of grace, or want of assurance.

One of the most pleasant fruits of our Christian growth is *assurance*. By this I understand: "the confidence of an advanced Christian of his being in the state of grace, or in other words, of being a believing and converted man, that belongs to Christ, and that surely shall obtain salvation."

Experience proves that many sincere friends of God and the Saviour miss this assurance, and that the number of those that are doubtful on this point is very great indeed. Many there are who know no greater desire than to be able to glory in the hope of salvation: but who, although they give sufficient proofs of the sincerity of their heart, mistrust the genuineness of their renewed sentiments and dispositions, or who continually change from hope to fear, from fear to hope; men therefore who are deprived of the consolatory hope of eternal life, and continue their way through life with a sad and fearful heart, at the same time that they have the greatest reason to rejoice in God.

In order to direct and encourage such Christians, I wish to prove *first:* that a *Christian may be assured of his salvation; secondly*, show *his interest in having this assurance; thirdly*, I wish to direct him as *to the way to obtain that assurance;* and *lastly*, I intend to

answer the question: *What may be the causes that so many pious men are not assured of their salvation? And which are the means for their recovery from this spiritual malady?*

In regard to the *first* point: that a Christian may be assured of his salvation, we may prove *firstly*, by the examples which affirm this. I appeal here to David and Asaph, of whose assured confidence the 23d and 73d Psalms may testify. I appeal to the Apostles Peter and Paul, the first of which spoke with so much calmness of the "putting off his tabernacle," and the latter, who gave so repeatedly evidences that "he knew in whom he had believed," that he awaited "the crown of righteousness," that he desired "to depart and be with Christ." I appeal to the examples of so many pious Christians throughout all ages and until this day, who spake with all confidence of their relation to God in Jesus Christ; who continued their way in simplicity and rejoicing; and who enjoyed on their death-beds a foretaste of heaven, by the proofs of their tender piety, and animated by their blessed prospects of a happy eternity.

That we may be assured of our salvation, we learn, *secondly*, from the declarations of Holy Scripture, as 2 Cor. v. 5, 6; Romans viii. in several instances, and further from many exhortations to "examine ourselves whether we be in the faith," "to make our calling and election sure;" which plainly suppose the possibility of assurance. *Lastly*, the nature of the case affirms it, as we are conscious of what we think

and believe; of our inclinations and sentiments; and therefore are enabled to come to the knowledge, whether or not we believe in Christ, whether or not we love Christ, whether or not we walk in the way of eternal life which Christ has shown unto us. A Christian may therefore be assured of his salvation.

And *this is of great interest to him.* This is the *second* point. I do not intend to say by this that the *assurance* is a necessary *requisite*, without which heaven will be shut against us; this the Bible does nowhere teach. Who knows what multitudes are glorifying God before His throne, who passed their days in this world in obscurity and doubt! But the *assurance* is of interest to the Christian, *firstly*, because *our eternal salvation is of so much importance, that we may not rest satisfied with uncertainty in this regard, and the truly sincere cannot be satisfied with uncertainty.* Who would act differently in regard to his temporal welfare? And how much more valuable is our eternal than our worldly interest! *Assurance* is important to the believer, *secondly*, because *it affords him the occasion to draw from the blessed declarations and promises of the gospel, all the true consolation which they are able to give.* Describe the great privileges of the pious here on earth and his glorious expectations in heaven, in the most impressing manner, the doubtful Christian will sigh: "Ah, could I but believe that I am a Christian in truth to whom these privileges and expectations belong!"

The assured, on the contrary, finds in them a source

of consolation. Conscious of his blessed relation towards the Lord, he beholds in these privileges *his* privileges, in these expectations *his* expectations. O how he rejoices in them! How they gladden his heart in prosperity! How they console him in adversity! How confident do they make him under all circumstances! How brave and resigned at the approach of death!

*Assurance*, lastly, *constrains and empowers the Christian to sanctification.* By acknowledging the grace he has received, he is able to render to God the glory of his work, and to feel his obligation for gratitude to God and the Saviour. Joyful through the consciousness of the treasure he possesses, he will walk diligently in the path of God's commandments. Believing in the mercy which he received, he will be kind, merciful, and ready to forgive towards his fellow-men. And the blessed expectation of eternal glory, in which he trusts, becomes to him a powerful encouragement to travel on with earnestness and diligence to his heavenly home!

*And what is the way to attain that assurance?* Must he receive that assurance by a voice from Heaven, some supernatural vision, or revelation? Far from it. It is undoubtedly the work of the Holy Spirit to assure the believer of his happy estate; but it is just as sure that He does this in the way of means. He does this by convincing him of the perfect certainty of the Divine declarations and promises of the Bible; by giving him a clear insight into the gospel; by making him attentive to his own feelings,

inclinations, and deeds, and by making him plainly observe in himself those evidences of true faith and piety which the Bible declares as such; and convincing him, therefore, that he has a well-founded ground to rejoice in the prospect of salvation. The way to attain this assurance is, therefore, this: 1st, To seek for an unwavering belief in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures, and of the declarations and promises they contain. 2d, To seek for a clear insight as to the way in which sinners, according to the gospel, may be saved, and to learn to know, from the Word of God, the true evidences which prove that one is truly walking in the way of salvation. 3d, To compare ourselves with those evidences, by giving a close attention to our ideas, inclinations, constant manner of life, and by exercising that self-examination of which we have spoken in Section XLI. of Vol. I. And, 4, To pursue our sanctification with all diligence, and thus to make our calling and election sure, following the lesson of the Apostle Peter, and adding to our "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

And so I have arrived, *fourthly*, to the question: *What may be the causes that so many pious men are not assured of their salvation? And what are the means for their recovery of this malady?*

A *first* cause is, *little progress in godliness.* Spiritual life is either but commencing or languishing. Is this your case? Christians, I pray you, is it then

astonishing if you feel not assured of being saved? A faith so little advanced, a piety so languishing, are difficult to recognize. Will you make your calling and election sure, so "strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees."

A *second* cause, in others, is, *ignorance about the true nature of faith, conversion, and sanctification.*

Many have already exercised *faith* for some time, without feeling certain of it, because they have no clear ideas as to wherein faith consists. Others who gradually returned to God, do not dare to consider themselves as truly converted, because they are under the erroneous impression that conversion consists in a sudden change of the entire man, which is accomplished in a single moment. Not a few form to themselves too high ideas about sanctification; they often complain, "Can I consider myself to be a true Christian, at the same time that I see the enormous depravity of my heart? Alas, how constantly have I to combat my passions! How often do I commit sin! How often do I feel slow and dull to prayer—how often I can but utter some formal supplication!" Is this your complaint, doubtful and discouraged Christian? Behold how little ground you have to be dismayed, as your ideas on this point are erroneous, as I have already sufficiently shown before. Endeavor to obtain clear views about faith, conversion, and sanctification. In judging ourselves whether or not we are truly converted, it is of little consequence in what manner the change of our heart and walk has taken place; the great point to which we

must look, is whether we think, feel, and act as converted men. And no stumblings, no disturbing depravity must darken our prospects as long as we can sincerely confess that we mourn over that depravity, and that we are earnestly determined to subdue it with the help of God's grace.

A *third cause* of this want of assurance is, that *many follow too often the opinion of others, who dictate false evidences of faith and conversion, which are not found in the Bible.* One says: "It is necessary to know exactly the day and hour of our being born again." Another says: "Conversion must be preceded by terrible agonies, we must have been brought to the despair of hell. The sincerity of conversion may be measured by its intensity." A third affirms, that to be assured, "we must experience something extraordinary, hear a voice from heaven, or see some vision." A fourth declares that "we must be converted in the same way as such or such a person." Many humble Christians trust in these declarations, and having no experience of these things, continue mournfully on their way. Is this your case, my friends, be not longer depressed by the erroneous opinions of men. Follow simply the Word of God. Where does the Bible speak of all such evidences? Many of these opinions we have already refuted on former occasions: I will here only add a few remarks. Often it is impossible to know the exact time of our conversion, as generally and mostly the Lord proceeds gradually and with slow steps in the regeneration of the sinner. A person

who, before his conversion, led a public wicked life, in which he was of a sudden arrested, may easily have that day engraved in his memory with indelible characters; but if a man should have received from his childhood a religious education, and lived an outward religious life, then we must not be astonished if the transformation of that religiousness to true piety, takes place in him in such an imperceptible and gradual manner, that it is quite impossible to fix the time of his conversion. This is still more difficult for persons who, from their youth, have feared the Lord What a difference must there have existed between Manasseh and Obadiah, between Paul and Samuel! In regard to the feelings attending conversion, our repentance must be heartfelt. Well may we weep in confessing our manifold sins! But who does not know that this weeping or not weeping, depends *not* always on the degree of our sincerity, but often on our more or less sensitive constitution, and on circumstances which may exercise a more or less visible influence on our affections.

A *fourth case* of the want of assurance in many sincere Christians, is *the fear of deceiving themselves.* They are afraid of being deceived by their self-love and the cunning of their heart; the more so as outward faith and virtue often take the place of true faith and sincere piety. Is this your case, fearful Christians, endeavor then to keep this fear, (which is commendable to a certain degree) within its proper limit, and remember that you must fear also denying the grace you have received, fear also falling

short in giving glory to God, who gave you that grace.

Can you deny that you prefer God to the world; that you mourn over your sins committed against the merciful God; that Jesus, with His merits, doctrine, and Spirit, is dear unto you; that you are seeking God not only in public, but also in secret; that you desire not only forgiveness, but also improvement; that you strive against your sins? O speak then to thyself, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God!" O, surely hope and trust entirely in the grace of God which is given unto you in Christ Jesus! *Lastly*, want of assurance may originate in *the fear of falling, perhaps, before the power of temptation, and of returning into the paths of sin, the ends of which are death.* "I know," many a Christian meditates at times, "I know in whom I believe *now*, whom I serve *to-day;* but I know also the weakness and corruptness of my heart, the power of temptation. I am so much exposed to sin! How often have I already been on the point of abandoning the warfare against sin—God knows what will become of me! The time may come, perhaps, that I will leave God and Jesus, and return to the way of the wicked."

No doubt, my Christian friend, but this contemplation may remind you of your constant danger, and of the wisdom and love of the Saviour, when he exhorts you to be sober, and not to slack in watchfulness, prayer, and strife, in short, in the use of all the means of grace; no doubt, "Watch ye, stand fast in

the faith, quit you like men, be strong." But as He gave you such lessons for your warning, so also does He give you the most blessed assurances of your preservation.

"I know them," my sheep, (thus He declares, 10th chapter of John) "and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." The Apostle Peter wrote therefore to the scattered believers: "You, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet. i. 5.

Surely He who has planted, beholds His work, and will not suffer that the plant be plucked out. Jesus never ceases to be your Advocate. How often were you sustained at the very moment you were ready to fall before the temptation. How often were you raised when you had fallen; led back when you had gone astray; healed when you were wounded; comforted when you were grieved. And would the unchangeable God be not always the same towards you! O, enjoy all the consolation which such truths and such experience may give you, and continue your warfare, rejoicing in the prospect of a certain victory.

PART SIXTH.—MALADIES IN REGARD TO DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES INTO WHICH CHRISTIANS MAY BE BROUGHT.

## SECTION XLVIII.

### Troubles of the soul under misfortunes or calamities.

It is sometimes in the plan of our Heavenly Father to send misfortunes and calamities to His children, and this to such an extent, as to bring them into very trying circumstances. In the 50th chapter of Isaiah, we read of pious men "Who walk in darkness and have no light." As the traveller who continues his way in a dark night, without perceiving a single ray of light, and to whom, therefore, everything around him, and even the road on which he travels, is shrouded in darkness; thus they continue their way through life in a darkness of outward misfortunes and calamities, in which they discover nothing which, to all human calculation, may give them any hope for relief or deliverance. Not seldom they lose, therefore, all hope, sit down "in sackcloth and ashes," become sometimes impatient, and appear soon to sink under the weight of their cross.

Afflicted Christians, so disconsolate under your calamities you must not be. "Who is among you (thus you are addressed in that fiftieth chapter of Isaiah) that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

To look to GOD *your* GOD, to expect salvation from

Him in the greatest darkness, *this* will bring peace and calmness to your souls; but this also you have all reason to expect. For your God the darkness is as the light, and even in the valley of the shadow of death, the Omniscient is with you. His wisdom can render your heaviest trials the sources of your happiness, and to change the darkness of night into the light of the morning. "Thus saith the Lord, have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke, I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." And what may you not expect from his lovingkindness in Christ, of his fatherly long-suffering and compassion; what may you not expect of the unchangeable and ever-faithful God? The more, as you must have already experienced, that they which trust in the Lord, will never be ashamed, and that the greatest distress often opens the way of deliverance and rejoicing. Instead, therefore, of mourning as *those* who have no hope, endeavor to follow the example of Abraham, who believed in hope against hope: *the Lord will provide;* and who believed this under the darkest circumstances, trusting that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead.

Other pious men, who have to struggle against calamity after calamity, are sometimes ready to doubt their friendly relation towards God, as they find it strange that their Heavenly Father should expose His children to such continued and heavy suffering. "Can I be a child of God? One trouble is hardly past, ere another attacks me with renewed force. If God were my friend and Father, would he permit a

calamity which wounds me so deeply? No, I cannot be His child, I read it in the severity of my lot. His hand meets me every-where."

How can you in any degree foster such distressing thoughts, my afflicted Christians, possessing as you do, the examples of the most excellent servants of God, who had to walk the most thorny roads through life? Is it not worth observing, that twice in the history of Joseph, and precisely when a new disaster was added to the weight of his afflictions, we read of him: *but the Lord was with Joseph.* Remember, also, the examples of Moses, David, Hezekiah, Daniel, Paul, and others, who were led in the darkest roads. And why should it not be so? Is it inconsistent with the holiness of our Heavenly Father thus to act in regard to children, who must readily declare: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities?" Is it in opposition to his wisdom and goodness? Chastises not a father the son whom he loveth? Are afflictions and calamities not the principal means in the hand of God to try and purify his children, to educate them for heaven? O, behold then your troubles and afflictions in that amiable light, even when new disasters are added to those you have already to bear. The cross that our own sagacity would select, is not the cross of which God approves. He generally wounds our most tender points, He attacks our most cherished enjoyments.

"In heaven and earth, in air and seas
He executes his wise decrees;
And by his saints it stands confessed,
That what he does is ever best.

Then, O my soul, submissive wait,
With reverence bow before his seat;
And midst the terrors of His rod,
Trust in a wise and gracious God."

### Section XLIX.

It often seems as if God does not hear the prayers of His children—Anxiety produced by it.

I allude here principally to prayers for temporal blessings, deliverances from cares and troubles and calamities, or prayers for friends and acquaintances, for church and country ; in short for all those general or more private objects which a Christian who lives near to God, and acknowledges Him in all his ways, often commends to his Father which is in Heaven. Now it happens often that in doing this, he receives not what he asketh. He crieth unto the Lord, but He answereth not. This renders him doubtful as to the sincerity of his prayer or the readiness of God to hear him. Still the Lord has positively promised to answer prayer ; this brings him in trouble and uncertainty, particularly so under trying circumstances, in the time of affliction and calamity. It then appears to him as if all the sorrow and pains of this world were to befall him, and as if He that dwelleth in the heavens, His God, were deaf to his cry.

To direct and comfort such Christians, I wish to make the following remarks.

*Firstly. The case is not new. The Bible speaks of several pious men who had the same experience.* Job complained : "I cry unto Thee and Thou dost not here me." Job xxx., 20. David had often oc-

casion, as his Psalms can prove, to cry unto God: "Hear my cry, O God; give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; attend to the voice of my supplications." The same it was with Habakkuk, (see chap. i. 2;) and Asaph, Psalm lxxvii.

*Secondly. Pious men may often find a just cause in themselves that God does not answer them;* sometimes by their faint and inconstant prayer—or by their little thankful observance of what they received in answer to what they asked. At other times, by their indulging in premeditated sins, by which their heart condemns them in their approaching God; things against which they ought therefore to watch with the greatest care. David said very correctly, Ps. lxv. 18: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

*Thirdly. Sometimes they pray for such things which God in His wisdom cannot grant to them, but instead of which He gives them something else, which answers His purposes and contributes much more to their happiness.* Pious men pray sometimes too absolutely for some bodily deliverance or for the life and recovery of a father, a husband, or child. Now the Lord may judge it better not to grant such requests, and in this respect He does not answer their prayer. But in another respect He hears them, and this they ought to observe, by giving them what is much better to them instead, as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, consolation, contentment, strength under sufferings, heavenly-mindedness, and such a turn in their circumstances as afterwards will prove to them of much

more benefit than that which they too absolutely asked. See Luke xi. 13.

*Fourthly. Pious men sometimes ask for something without using the proper means, by which God will grant them their request.* God is a God of order, who will not give us in a miraculous manner what we may obtain, under His blessing, by a diligent use of suitable means. He who wishes to be heard must join to this prayer the use of these means. If pious people pray for instance for their daily bread or for some deliverance, and are meanwhile slothful in business; if they pray for the conversion of their children, and at the same time neglect their religious education, how can they expect that God should hear them?

*Fifthly.* We must not forget that *God often defers giving His help, instead of answering immediately the moment we ask Him.* On this point I wish to refer my readers to Section XXXIV, to which may be added that the things for which one asketh, are often of a nature that they cannot be given instantly, and that often several other slowly unfolding circumstances must work together for their accomplishment. Instead therefore of becoming at once discouraged and impatient, it is our duty to continue in prayer, waiting for the Lord and abiding His salvation with all patience.

SECTION L.

What have we to understand by spiritual forsaking, or the hiding of God's face?

In the Scriptures of the Old Testament we read of the "forsaking of the Lord," of "hiding himself," as for instance, Ps. xxii. 1; Ps. xiii. 1; Deut. xxxi. 17; Isaiah. lvii. 17; and others.

Some have understood such expressions as if they alluded to a *spiritual* forsaking of God, a *spiritual* hiding of His face; to which they add that the Lord thus forsakes His true servants, without their giving any cause for it, as a sovereign act, by which He deprives them for sometime of His strength and consolation, although for wise reasons.

But this is an erroneous idea. The *forsaking* of which we read in the above places, alludes to *outward* trouble or distress, in which God suffers men to remain without granting them His help and preservation; as we may see Judges vi. 13. And when we read that the Lord is *hiding his face*, we have to understand by it, that God does not answer one's prayer for deliverance from outward dangers or calamities—but leaves him for some time under their weight without returning to him with His mighty help. Ps. xxiii.; Deut. xxxi. 17, 18; Psalm xxvii. 8–12; and it is represented in the Bible, as an act of God, not of mere arbitrary sovereignty, without any cause, but as the just consequence of sins committed by them against God. See again, Deut. xxxi. 17, 18; Chron. xv. 2.

There is, however, a state of the soul which in some respects resembles the above description. I will describe this in the example of Theophilus, and conclude with a few remarks.

Theophilus could believe heretofore and felt persuaded that God was his God and Father in Christ. He beheld in Him only forgiveness and love. He enjoyed in abundant measure the influences of the Holy Spirit. At that time he rejoiced in the God of his salvation; his heart was sensible of every good impression, and was excited to live strictly to the Lord —he praised God continually. But those good times have passed by. The consolation has left his heart. His mind has become very dark. He cannot believe any longer that he is an object of God's fatherly love in Christ Jesus. He enjoys nothing more of that blessed experience which was formerly imparted in communion with God. God appears terrible in his eye. In himself he discovers nothing but depravity and sin. This overwhelms his conscience. He possesses no longer any zeal and strength for well-doing, and is more inclined to do evil. He prays to God for deliverance, but the Lord answereth not. He complains to God in his afflictions, but He seems to be deaf to his supplications. Neither the most blessed truths nor the most consolatory promises have any influence on his darkened mind; and his present position becomes the more grievous by the remembering the happy experience of former days.

This is a sad case of which many, on the way

through life, are not entirely ignorant; but in regard to which I must observe, *firstly*, that the Bible does not intend this state of the soul in the passages alluded to; *secondly*, that God, by permitting his true friends to come into such a state, does not withdraw *His favor* from them, but only, for a time, the *proofs* of his favor, by which they are deprived of that joyful state of heart which is produced by the knowledge and experience of the Divine love and presence; *thirdly*, that our Heavenly Father never suffers his children to come into this state of heart without their giving some occasion for it, but that they must seek the cause in themselves and in their own faults, except in case of melancholy of the soul, arising from indisposition of the body.

It is by slothfulness, by carelessness, in regard to the means of grace, by striving against and grieving the Holy Spirit, and by idolizing cherished sins, that we deprive ourselves of the blessing, the strength and consolation, promised in the diligent use of means; that we exclude the Holy Spirit, with the evidences of His presence; that we enslave ourselves more and more to sin; and in this way it becomes impossible to retain in our souls a consolatory sense of God's grace in our behalf. This deplorable state of the soul is, in fact, a lamentable consequence of that backsliding of which we have spoken in the *fourth part* of this chapter, to which I refer my readers, only adding, that God, in *wisdom and love*, permits us to remain for some time in such a mourn-

ful condition, in order to teach us, by experience, how bitter it is to sin against God, so that we may apply ourselves the more to diligent watchfulness, and draw nigh unto God, the God of our salvation.

### Section LI.

#### A Christian, under the fear of death.

There are pious Christians who look with fearful apprehension towards the hour of death, and the consequences of death, the separation of body and soul, and the solemn day of final judgment. Some are troubled by this fear only at intervals, in others, it is a serious malady; they cannot hear about death without feeling distressed, and may be said to live *under the fear of death.*

It is not astonishing, neither, as death in itself is a king of terrors. It is the consequence of sin, and of our innate desire for life. The dying hour can be terrible, indeed. What an astonishing change does death produce in the body! How little do we know about the state of the soul after it leaves our mortal frame! And exactly that ignorance, that strangeness, that passing into a dark state, of which we never had the least experience, how apt is it to fill our soul with trouble! The more, as at the hour of death the soul loses all communication with this world, and all that was dear to it here, and enters into a state where it can in no wise direct itself; a state, above all, where it will be in immediate communion with God, to give an account of all the deeds done in the body.

I must remark that there is no way of alleviating this fear for persons who persist in the ways of sin—they have reason, alas! great reason, to fear—and even faint and doubtful piety will not easily conquer the fear of death. But I address myself to you, Christians, who seek your salvation in sincere faith in Jesus Christ, who go through Jesus to God as your Father, and who are earnestly decided to live in His strength after the commandments of God, and to His glory! Why should ye fear for death? I might ask you: how can death alarm you, as an Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a Joseph, David, Paul, and Peter, and all pious men that ever lived, (a few extraordinary cases only excepted,) have died also; and as the most excellent and most blessed of God's children have to submit daily to the same law of the grave. But I must direct your attention to different reasons; and,

*Firstly, Even should you be entirely ignorant of the state of death, you might enter death with perfect and fearless confidence in God.* Justified by faith, you are reconciled with God, through Jesus Christ. You trust that your life and lot is in His hands, and that He will lead you by His wise counsel. You have often cast your cares upon the Lord, and also often experienced, under different circumstances, in changing your dwelling-place, that God cared for you in the most adorable manner wherever you might be. And will he not remain the same God towards you, even in the state of death? Wherever your soul may dwell, every-where will it be in the Universe of your

Father. But, more, will not your soul be in the hands of your Heavenly Father, "and none be able to pluck it out of your Father's hand?" Shall it not be well, not safe, in the hands of God? Can any thing, can death, separate you from the love of Christ? O follow, therefore, the example of Abraham, who, "by faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went." Heb. xi. 8.

But, *secondly*, you have the less reason to fear for death, pious Christians, because *instead of being entirely ignorant about the state of death, you possess on the contrary the most glorious, infallible discovery, and promises in regard to your position in the world to come.* Whatever be unknown to you, *this* you know positively by the Word of the true God, that when *absent from the body* we will *be present with the Lord;* that departing from life, we will be with Christ in the most blessed place, in *Paradise.* You shall enter into rest. All tears shall be wiped away. There you will see God, know Him more and more, and serve Him in holiness. There you will see and be conformed unto Jesus. Your soul will be delivered from the painful strife against sin. Your faith will be changed into sight. It is true you must lay down this mortal body! But what a body! And how glorious is the promise of Jesus: "I will raise him up at the last day!"

The day of final judgment will be to you not a day of terror, but of public justification, of joy, of trans-

port, of victory, after which you will inherit *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* And can you therefore fear for death, which in God's wisdom has become for you the door to that life of happiness and glory?

What still may trouble you perhaps is the moment of death itself; but let me here say for your encouragement, *thirdly*, that *whenever your death hour will have arrived, you may surely depend on the consolatory presence, and the mighty assistance of your God and Saviour.* This you must expect of your God *who will be your guide even unto death*, Ps. xlviii. 14; who has promised you: "fear not, for I am with thee." Isaiah xli. 10; and whose "rod and staff may comfort you, even when you shall walk through the valley of the shadow of death!" (See Psalm xxiii.)

This you may expect of Jesus, your Saviour, who conquered death, and experienced it himself; who knows what it is to die; and in this respect also will be *merciful* towards you and *succor* you in the hour of death. Heb. ii. 17, 18.

But perhaps you say: "I experience so little strength and courage to die, I feel so afraid for that solemn hour." But do you already need that strength and courage to-day? Has your death-hour arrived? The Lord generally retains the strength to die until the hour of death. This is sufficiently proved by the examples of many pious Christians, who, as long as they enjoyed health, looked with fearful apprehension towards the hour of death, and who either went

into their rest in an unconscious or sudden manner, or who, in the hour of departure, received so much grace and consolation and support, that they not only approached death courageously, but even rejoicing and exulting.

Meditate often, my Christian, on these reasons against the fear of death. Make yourself familiar with the sweet and amiable expressions of *resting*, *sleeping*, of *being present with the Lord;* expressions which the Bible uses in speaking of the death of the pious. Commend often your spirit to your Father in Christ Jesus. Endeavor to live nigh unto Him, and to preserve a vivid conception of your relation towards God and the Saviour. This is the best way to join with heartfelt joy in the song of the believer:

"There is a house not made with hands
Eternal and on high;
And here my spirit, waiting, stands
Till God shall bid it fly.

Shortly this prison of my clay
Must be dissolved and fall;
Then, O my soul, with joy obey
Thy heavenly Father's call.

'Tis He, by his almighty grace,
That forms thee fit for heaven;
And, as an earnest of the place,
Has His own Spirit given.

To walk by faith of joys to come;
Faith lives upon His Word;
But while the body is our home,
We're absent from the Lord.

'Tis pleasant to believe Thy grace,
But we had rather see;
We would be absent from the flesh,
And present, Lord, with Thee."

# CHAPTER V.

DIRECTIONS AND LESSONS FOR MORE ADVANCED AND CONFIRMED CHRISTIANS.

## Section LII.

### Introductory.

According to my plan, as stated in Section I., I have now arrived at the end of my task, which I wish to conclude with some directions and lessons for more advanced and confirmed Christians; such Christians as are less susceptible to the spiritual maladies, which we have treated in the foregoing pages, but who, on the contrary, have progressed under God's blessing in Christianity; who in the fruits have found the evidence of the sincerity of their faith; who, in short, proceed with a steady step in the road of true godliness, in the hope of eternal life.

To them the following lessons and directions may be welcome and profitable for the promotion of their Christian growth.

## Section LIII.

### Be on your guard against careless ease.—Watch and strive.

The first thing which claims their attention is to be careful, *not to find occasion in their progressing in Christianity to careless ease and slowness, but to remain watchful and striving unto perfection.* Whenever we have progressed in what is good, when it is well in our hearts, we run a great risk of becom-

ing satisfied with our improvement, and of relying upon the proper state of our heart. This readily leads to careless ease and indifference about the dangers which continually surround us, and to slowness in the practice of godliness. To stand still on the road through life, is the same as going rapidly backward; and the first principles of slackening, are often the forerunners of the deepest fall. Be therefore on your guard, pious Christian! Be watchful, strive onward—ever onward, and follow the example of that apostle, whose language it was: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

### Section LIV.

Be on your guard against spiritual pride, and walk in humbleness before God and men.

This is a *second* direction. Spiritual pride is that vice by which a man forms too high opinions of his spiritual gifts and Christian growth, and, boasting of the grace he has received, assumes the right to judge in a decided manner of the state of others before God; to look down with disregard on his fellow-men and fellow-Christians; to discourage many an obscure and humble but sincere and pious follower of Jesus; and to exercise dominion over the inheritance of the Lord. How despicable must be this pride in the eyes of God. How uncharitable and offending towards our fellow-men! How pernicious and danger-

ous for ourselves, as it hinders us in our growth, and not seldom becomes the justly deserved cause of our fall. How foolish, lastly, as the most pious must thank God and His grace for all that he is, and with all his improvement, remains so far from perfection, that he is ever obliged to confess before God that he is a miserable and unworthy sinner.

Let confirmed Christians often remember this! It is highly necessary for them, as they are so much exposed to this kind of pride; because consciousness of progressing in what is noble and good, is a natural occasion for self-exaltation. May they, then, remember often, in their prayers to God, that they should be humble and lowly-minded in their own sight. This will render them humble before God and men. O, for the humble believer, who with his heart declares, "By the grace of God I am what I am. What have I that I did not receive!" The humble believer who, notwithstanding his progressing in the road of godliness, goes on with a humble sense of his unworthiness and depravity; and who expresses those feelings by kindness and good-will in his conversation; who is ever desirous to take advice, and to learn of others. He is an ornament to society, an ornament to religion, a benefactor to his fellow-men!

### Section LV.

#### Love God, and glorify His holy name.

Confirmed Christians, *thirdly*, should feel it to be their duty *to love and to glorify their God and infinitely merciful Father.* They are exhorted to do so, as, for instance, Psalm xxxi. 23; Jude, verse 21;

1 Thess. v. 18; Eph. v. 20; 1 Cor. vi. 20, and x. 31. This is the object to which they are created and saved. 1 Pet. ii. 9. This will be their occupation in Heaven. The examples of excellent men, as a David and Paul, must herein encourage them. And can they ever think of the riches of the Divine love and grace towards them, without feeling their obligation to do so?

Sincere friends of God and the Saviour! To awake that love the more in your hearts, allow me to remind you of what great things God has done for you, for which you never can sufficiently thank Him! I will not speak of the numberless temporal blessings which He has bestowed upon you since you were born, and which will follow you unto the grave. I will only direct you to the spiritual and heavenly blessings with which He has blessed you in Jesus Christ.

More than eighteen centuries before you were born, before the moment, therefore, that you could feel any love towards Him, God showed that He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For you the Son of God walked spotless, holy, on this earth. For you He was, in His blessed Word, the Light of the World. For you he suffered with meekness and submission, the most grievous and most degrading tortures. For you He was willing to bleed and to die on the cross of Calvary, for the forgiveness of your sins. At that time the foundation was laid of all the joy and consolation which you here receive from the Lord; the founda-

tion to the possessing of that great good which is reserved for you in Heaven. Before you were born, God cared already for your instruction and edification. At that time existed already His Word, His institutions, His church, and so many means which you have been allowed to use since your early childhood, and which you may use yet. Perhaps you received a religious education, which, blessed by God, laid in your youthful heart the principles of true piety—and how great was that privilege! Or perhaps you have, for some time, loved the world, and lived for the world, although the eye of your merciful God never abandoned you, but preserved you from committing some particular sins! Or perhaps, must you remember an unhappy past, in which you did not restrain your passions and lusts? . . . . and O, how miserable would have been the end of those ways of sin! But, no, God was gracious unto you. He beheld you as a sheep that had erred and gone astray amidst the greatest dangers. He opened your eyes, so that you might see your danger. He made you see what you are, what you did, and what would become of you. The adorable Saviour, Jesus Christ, became the object of your faith, of your hope and refuge; and the only wise, good, and holy will of God obtained the preference above the will of your passions and lusts. What a change of heart and conduct did God thus produce by His Word and Spirit! And how many proofs have you received to this very day of His faithfulness, His patience, His fatherly compassion, in keeping you in these new

principles; in bringing you back when you were ready to go astray; in assisting you to attain that height in your Christian growth wherein you now rejoice! It is true, means and circumstances had to work together to that end; men had to instruct, to warn, and assist you; your own diligence, study, hearing, praying, watching, exercising, all was necessary to make you at last, in the practice of the gospel, what you now are. But who provided those means, those circumstances, those instructing, helping men? Who gave you that diligence, that love for the truth, that inclination of heart, that hearing ear? Is it not God? Christian, you will be ready to acknowledge already, here below, what you will hereafter acknowledge in glory, before the throne of God: "Yea, merciful Father, by Thy grace I am what I am. Not to me, not to me, to Thee alone be the honor." And now, Christian, behold the happiness you have in this way received. You have redemption, forgiveness of sin, through the blood of Christ. You are, in the strictest terms, a child of your Heavenly Father; and if you are His child, then also His heir, and joint heir with Christ. You live to God, so that sin cannot reign any longer in your mortal body. In hope, you are already saved. And the sufferings of this present world cannot be compared with the glory which will be revealed in you. Behold, then, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon you; and thus has He loved you from all eternity; for with God there is no change or succession of moments. What He is for you to-day,

that He would be to you from all eternity, that He will remain forever! And should not this God be the object of your gratitude, your love, and your glorying?

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

## Section LVI.

Employ your improvements and gifts here on earth, to the well-being of your fellow-men!

This is the duty of all advanced Christians. The Saviour commanded Peter: "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." In the Church of Christ every member, like the members of the human body, must work together to the perfection of the whole. Rom. xii. 5–9; 1 Cor. xii. By this we must show our sincerity in praying, "Thy kingdom come." Every Christian must, as far as he is able, "preach the gospel to every creature." The honor of God and the Saviour, gratitude, charity, the excellency of the gospel, all must constrain us to this blessed work. Therefore, to instruct the ignorant, to correct error and prejudice, to strengthen the doubtful, to reprove the irregular, to warn the careless, to exhort the unconverted, to kindle good impressions in sensible hearts, to give counsel to the distressed, to encourage those of little faith, to comfort them that mourn, to animate the slothful, and to strengthen

others in faith, hope, and charity; to use our name, influence, and wealth, to promote the cause of religion; all these are important, but at the same time amiable duties, which every Christian, and particularly every advanced Christian, has to fulfill according to the position and circumstances in which he is placed, and according to the different measure of the gifts of Christ which he has received.

It is important, however, to consider in what manner we strive to obtain this end. Christians, do you really wish to be useful, and promote the cause of your Lord and Saviour? Away then with all sourness, stiffness, affectation, and all strange and formal expressions, in which we are so apt to imitate others, and which but awaken the sneers and ridicule of the enemies of piety and godliness. Show yourself simply as you are. Speak as God has given you to speak, and as you speak about other subjects. Bear the expression of contentment and gladness. Be polite, kind, affable, winning. Be reverent, earnest, serious; but in the meantime unaffected, plain, artless, natural. Thus you will follow the Saviour, and be profitable to your fellow-men.

"Lord of teachers, blessed Jesus,
As thou wert, make us to be;
Then what pleaseth Thee will please us:
We shall then resemble Thee."

SECTION LVII.

Continue your way rejoicing in the cheerful prospects of the fulfilling of all God's promises.

Strangers and pilgrims here on earth, who are seeking a better country, who are travelling home; O continue your way rejoicing in the faithful expectation of the fulfilling of all God's promises! That you have manifold reason to go on *rejoicing*, we have already sufficiently shown. But in regard to the use of God's promises, the Bible contains a valuable treasure of the most blessed promises to believing pious men; promises as to what they may expect from God and Jesus for the future; promises in regard to our temporal and spiritual wants; promises for all circumstances and occurrences on our road to heaven; promises for this life and for eternity. Be often engaged in collecting these promises; meditate upon their preciousness; become familiar with them in order to have them at hand in the circumstances to which they are applicable to your encouragement. Be not too scrupulous to apply them to yourselves. Do you not belong to those to whom they were made?

How often have you perhaps already experienced that God does not forget what He assures us of? He is true and faithful. What his lips have uttered, he changeth not. And whenever the Lord seems to delay, await the fulfilling of his promises with patience, *as the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth. Be ye also patient; stablish your*

*hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.* This correct use of God's promises will not only strengthen and comfort you on the remainder of your road, be it smooth and pleasant or rough and thorny, but engage you the more to redouble your steps with renewed courage and zeal. Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort. The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

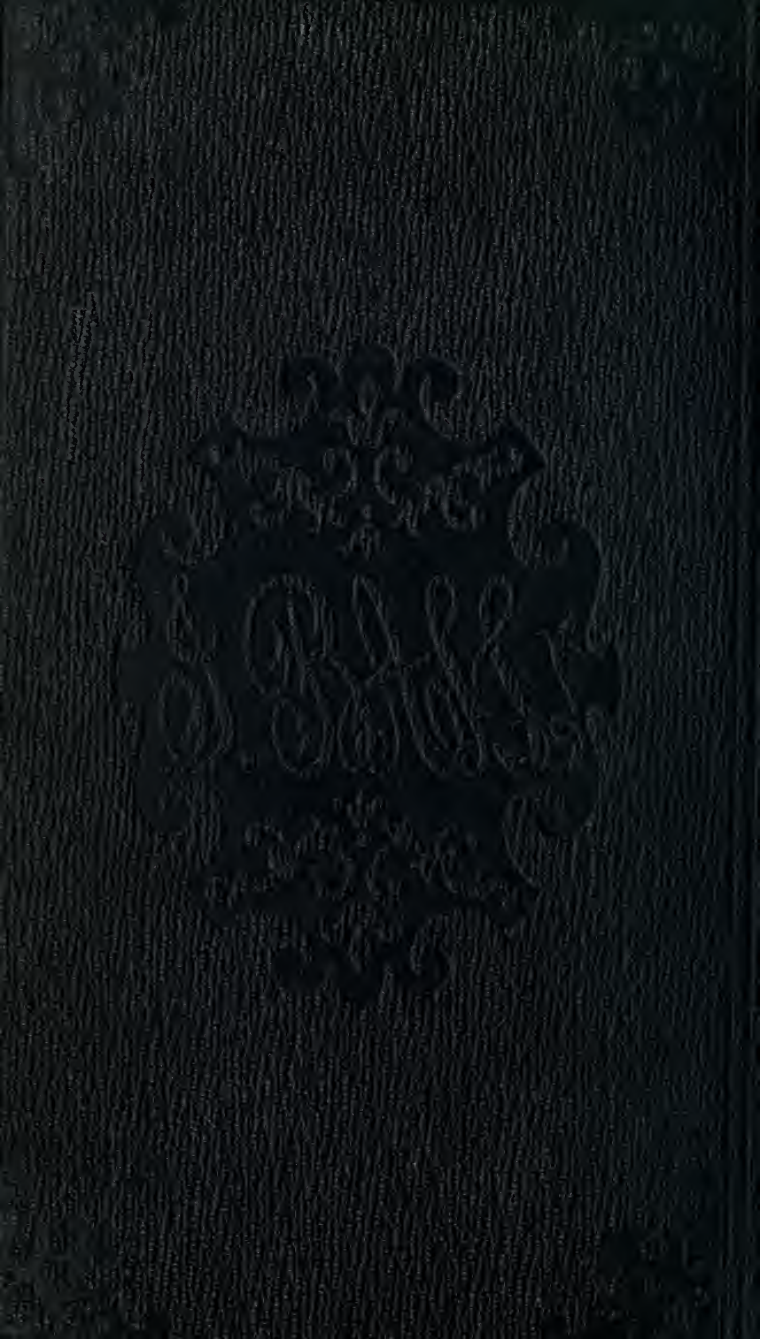
THE END.

## CONCLUSION.

And I may add a few lines? We have now read together this precious directory through life from the pen and heart of a learned and pious servant of God. And what do you think of it? Has it not inspired you with most amiable ideas of God and the Saviour? Has it not proven to you anew that the Gospel is *glad* tidings? That it is, *above all*, desirable to be a true and perfect Christian? No doubt it has. But to secure the true benefit of Kist's work, we have to do more than read it once through. If Kist had not been too modest to recommend his own writing, I suppose he would have said, about its use, something like the following:—

"After reading it through, in order to obtain a clear view of the whole plan of this book, let it become your daily guide, to take the next place to your Bible. Ask yourself, in the presence of God, to which of the different classes of Christians you belong, to whom his remarks are addressed, and study such part, with earnest prayer to God; follow the directions, advice, and lessons, which the experienced Christian writer gives you; and the result will show you that he spoke the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Do you read your name among those of whom he speaks in the first chapters of this volume? O, I pray you, consider the great necessity of your not

resting until he addresses you as advanced Christians on the last pages of his book!"

Read it daily, and you will find it a source of peace and consolation and joy; for it is a fountain of true knowledge of God and the Saviour; *and* THIS *is life eternal, that we may* KNOW *the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.*

In conclusion, Christian reader, I might make some excuses about the inferiority of the translation, when compared to the original; but those excuses would not come from the heart. I conclude these pages with a tear of gratitude to God, who in this work visibly *hath holpen me.* I now commend it to His blessing; hoping and praying that it may bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold, to the glory of God and the Saviour. Amen.